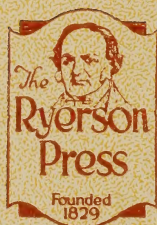
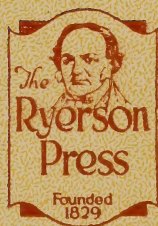
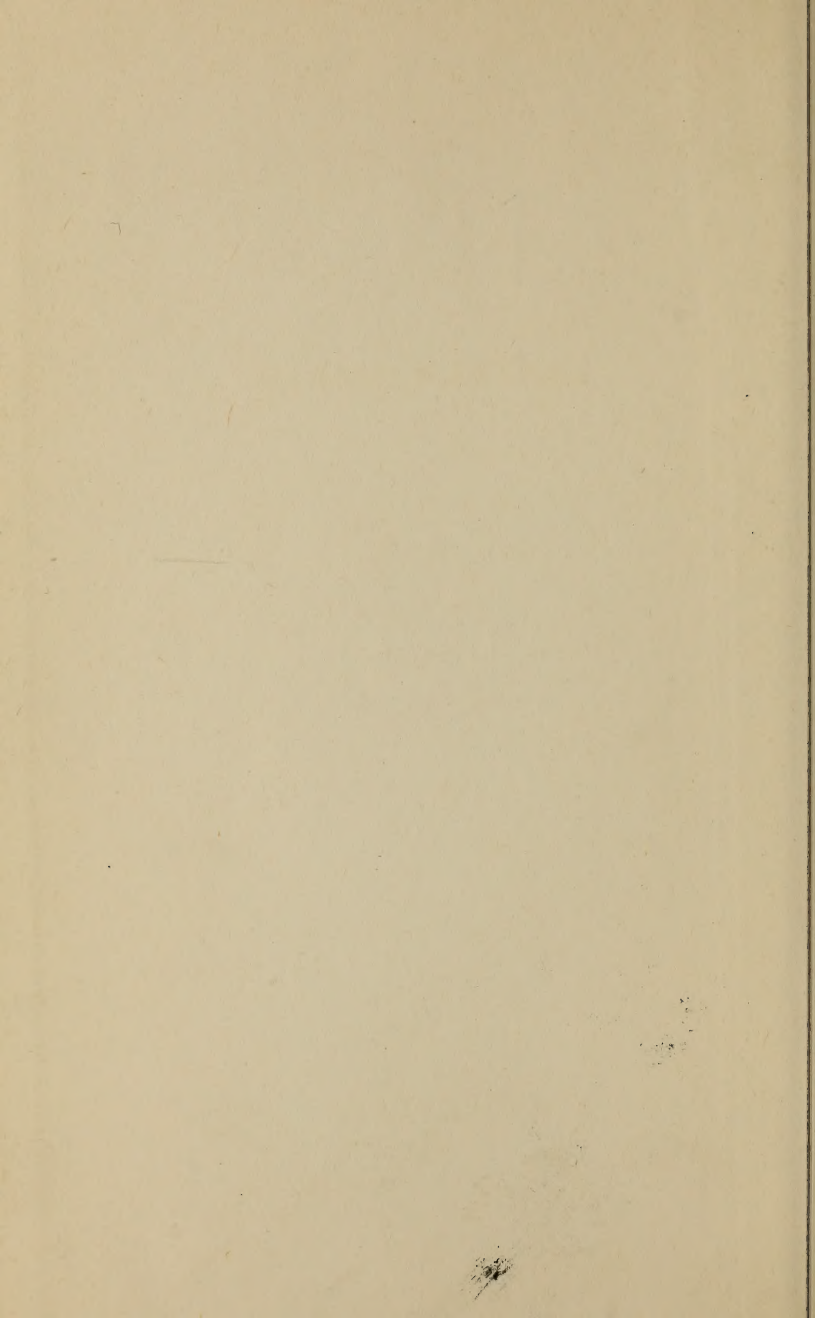


LANTERN MARSH

Beaumont S. Cornell







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By

BEAUMONT S. CORNELL

(Author of "Renaissance")

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TO MY WIFE

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BOOK I
LANTERN MARSH

LANTERN MARSH

CHAPTER I.

A FATHER'S LOVE

MAUNEY BARD did not enjoy mending fences. They were quite essential in the general economy of farming. Without them the cows would wander where they had no business, trampling precious crops or perhaps getting mired in these infernal boglands. In principle, therefore, his present occupation was logical, but in practice it was tedious.

During the long afternoon he occasionally paused for diversion to gaze across the wide tract of verdant wilderness before him. Like a lake, choked by vegetation from beneath and strangled by determined vegetation on all sides, the Lantern Marsh surrendered its aquatic ambition. There was very little water to be seen. Only a distant glare of reflected sky remained here and there, espied between banks of thick sedges. A cruel conspiracy of nature! Acres of rice-grass and blue flags with their bayonet-like leaves stabbed up through the all-but-hidden surface, while a flat pavement of rank lilies hastened to conceal any water that dared show itself. For two gloomy miles the defeated thing extended, while outraged evergreens, ill-nourished and frantic, crowded close, like friends, to shield its perennial disgrace.

It had always been there, unexplored and forbidding, inhabited by the mud hen, the wild duck, and the blue crane. Mauney sometimes hated its desolate presence and wondered why his father's farm had to be so near it. But the question challenged custom and actuality—things his young brain had not learned to affront.

Late in the afternoon he was roused from work by a sound as of tensed, satin fans cutting the air. He looked up to behold the broad wings of a blue crane, passing low. The rising wind which had roused it from its feeding grounds brought the dank odor of decayed poplar wood and the wild aroma of rice-grass. His eye dropped to the green waste of the marsh, brushed into fitful waves of tidal grey, and then shifted to the moving limbs of bare hemlocks and birches at the border of the swamp.

Chilled by the sharp blast, he straightened himself to his feet, his shirt moulded to the underlying sculptury of his vigorous young chest. His wind-tossed, auburn hair pealed back from his fine forehead, as his wide, blue eyes received the rugged beauty and his lips smiled from sheer visual delight. Then, as he gazed, a bright magic, bursting from the west behind him, transformed his wilderness momentarily to a static tableau of metallic gold.

It was supper time. Moments since the kitchen bell had been ringing, rocking under its cupola on the kitchen roof. His father, his brother and the hired man, fertilizing the grain field beyond the shoulder of the hill, would have heard it and be promptly on their way. After drawing on his faded coat, he picked up a pair of pliers from the ground and shoved them into the hip

pocket of his overalls. He shouldered his axe and saw, then started.

The long marsh was separated from his father's farm by the Beulah road, a narrow clay highway curving past the head of the swamp toward the village of Beulah. In the opposite direction, it ran on eventually to the town of Lockwood on the bank of the St. Lawrence. The Bard farmhouse, a prosperous red brick structure, faced the road and the swamp, presenting a stone fence of dry masonry, and within the fence an apple-orchard. At one side a lane, guarded by a board gate, led in from the road.

As Mauney swung up the lane toward the farmyard the crisp snap of a whip was borne to his ears from below the shoulder of the grain-field, followed by a man's call to his horses:

"Git ap! yah lazy devils! git ap!"

A second crack of the whip—then the rumble of heavy wheels and the rattle of the board-bottom of the wagon. The usual, boring sights and sounds!

The yard echoed to the barking of a collie who was springing in savage enjoyment at the heels of tardy cows. The lazy animals jogged in awkward trot, as their full udders swung to the rhythm of their gait. As Mauney crossed the yard, wading with gluey steps through the soft under-foot, the dog darted toward him, splashing through brown-stained pools of stagnant water.

"Go on back, Rover!" he commanded, stepping aside to avoid his rough welcome. "Chase them up, Rover!"

Rover paused on his four feet only long enough to cast up a glance of searching inquiry at his young master's face, when, as if satisfied that his mood were con-

genial, he immediately returned to his task with doubled despatch.

In making toward the great, red barn at the farther side of the yard, Mauney passed the henhouse, from which radiated a pungent, ammoniacal odor, all too familiar to his nostrils. In the drive shed, on the beams several white hens were settling to roost. One of these fowl, jealous of position, pecked the head of its fellow, causing an expostulant cackle of pain. The sudden disturbance of this sound spread to the precincts of the quiescent henhouse, whereupon one crescendo of rasping invective followed another, leading to a distracting medley of full-throated excitement, that subsided only at the masterly clarion of a rooster, angry at being disturbed.

The returning wagon now rumbled nearer, over flat stones behind the barn, its heavy roar measured by the regular, metallic clip of the horses' well-shod hoofs. "Git ap, there! What're yuh doin' there!" came the gruff voice of his father. A loud whip-crack broke the steady rhythm of the horses' hoofs into an irregular gallop, while the thunder of the wagon filled the yard with increasing vibration.

Mauney ascended the stone bridge to the great double doors, which, owing to the wind, he opened with difficulty, and entered to grease the teeth of his saw and hang it carefully on two spikes driven into the side of the hay mow. He stood his axe in a corner and tossed the pliers into an empty soap box that stood on a rough carpenter's bench. One of the doors, which he had left open, now slammed shut, stirring up a stifling cloud of chaff and rendering the interior of the barn unpleasantly dark. In turning he stumbled over a stick of stove-

wood, used for blocking the wheels of the hay-wagon, and fell forward. Putting out his right hand, he brought the palm down heavily on the sharp end of a spike that projected from an upturned board. He regained his feet quickly and clasped his injured hand. It was too dark to see, but he felt a trickle of hot fluid accumulating in his other palm. A sickening pain mounted his arm in spirals, but he whistled a snatch of a song, and left the barn.

As he passed quickly toward the kitchen, the heavy team of Clydesdales rounded the corner of the yard, lifting their front feet high, their heads tightly reined, with foam blowing from their white mouths. As they were pulled up to a stop a horse within the barn whinnied. Then Mauney presently heard the jingle of chains as the team were being unhitched, and in the quiet air, his father's voice saying:

"The young fellah's gave us the 'slip!'"

His brother William's voice replied in the same disagreeable tone: "Wonder he wouldn't give us a hand unhitchin.' Fixin' fences is easier'n spreadin' cow dung. Least he could do would be to throw the horses a little hay!"

A warm wave of anger flushed Mauney's face as he halted in the middle of the yard, half determined to go back, but his hand drove him imperatively toward the kitchen. On the edge of the porch he relieved his boots of adhering mud and manure on a scraper made from an old draw-knife turned upside down between supports. The two long upper panels of the kitchen door were replaced by glass and draped inside by a plain cotton curtain, through which a glow of lamp-light gave Mauney a grateful impression of homely coziness. After

rubbing his boots on the oval verandah mat of plaited rags, he pressed down the thumb latch and entered.

"Hello, Maun," came a woman's voice from the pantry, half-drowned by the noise of a mechanical egg-beater. "D'juh get the marsh fence finished?"

"Rome wasn't built in a day, you remember," he replied as affably as his feelings allowed.

"That's right," she called above the sound, "but your old man prob'ly thinks it didn't take over a week."

Mauney was examining his hand near the coal-oil lamp on the kitchen table. The spike had completely perforated his palm leaving a torn wound that still bled. He tossed his hat to the old couch by the door and bent nearer the lamp. Although big-bodied he had a boyish face, filled now with youthful perplexity. The skin over the prominent bridge of his nose had an appearance of being tightly drawn, although his nostrils were as sensitive as the young lips beneath them. His chin, by its fullness, suggested a vague, personal determination to be expected in one older, but his eyes sparkled with that devotion of eager attention which is reserved to youth alone.

He glanced toward the pantry from which the beating sound still emerged. "Do you know what to do for this?" he asked loudly.

The noise of the beater stopped.

"What d'juh say?"

"I hurt my hand and—"

She came forth, with her muscular arms covered by shreds of dough, and walked to glance at his stained hand.

"Oh good God!" she exclaimed, turning away. "I certainly do hate blood, Maun."

She began rubbing the adherent dough from her arms.

"Just a minute," she said. "Go soak it in the wash basin—here's some warm water." Taking a tea-kettle from the flat-topped stove, she poured into the basin, adding some cold water from the cistern pump.

As Mauney proceeded to follow her advice she rummaged through a cotton bag, hung on the back of the pantry door. "It'll be all right, Maun," she cheerfully prophesied. "A cut like that is safe if it bleeds, but if it don't, watch out!"

She was a well-formed woman of twenty-seven, a trifle masculine about the shoulders, but with a feminine enough face displaying sharp, hazel eyes beneath black, straight brows. Her nose was passably refined, but her full lips wore a careless smile that lent not only a gleam of golden teeth, but a mild atmosphere of coarseness to her face. The excitement of Mauney's injury had called up circumscribed patches of crimson to her cheeks and accentuated the nervous huskiness of her voice.

"One time," she continued, while she tore a white cloth into long narrow strips, "my cousin ran a nail in her foot. They got Doc. Horne, and he did—God only knows what—but her foot got the size of a punikin, only redder."

"Blood-poisoning?"

"Yep."

As she rolled two or three crude bandages she glanced occasionally at Mauney, with keen, appraising eyes that followed the stretch of his broad shoulders bent over

the sink. As she nervously applied the bandage, a moment later, the sound of boots scraping outside the door contributed an added haste to her manner. Before she had finished, the door opened to admit Seth Bard.

Mauney's father was of average height, but heavily built, with ponderous shoulders and a thick, short neck. Beneath the broad, level rim of his Stetson the lamp-light showed the full, florid face of a man who continually peered at life through half-closed lids in calloused, self-confident reserve, or as if hiding what men might read in his eyes, if he opened them. He stopped abruptly inside the door, his thumbs caught into the top of his trousers, and stood haughtily still for an instant, the personification of master in his house.

Mauney's back was turned toward him so that the father could not see the occupation causing such seemingly friendly terms between his son and his hired woman. His narrow eyes studied them in mystification.

"What's all this?" he gruffly demanded, as the face of William appeared over his shoulder with the same inquisitive expression.

"Annie's doing up my hand," Mauney replied calmly.

Bard covered the floor in long strides to glance at the white bandage through which a red stain had already soaked.

"Do it up yerself!" he commanded, seizing the woman's arm and pulling her away. "Where's the supper, Annie?"

"Oh, it'll be ready by the time you get some o' the muck off your hands," she said, good-naturedly, as she set about stirring a boiling pot on the stove.

As Mauney stood trying to adjust the dressing, he

struggled to overcome an instinct of fight, wondering how much longer he would be able to tolerate his father's crude domination. Presently the woman had the supper served and the men, having washed themselves, were sitting down.

The oval table was covered with a plain yellow oil-cloth. At the middle stood a heavy earthenware dish filled with steaming, half-peeled potatoes, and near it, on a folded newspaper, an agateware sauce-pan held beet-roots. Five plates of blurred willow pattern were piled by the father's place, while before them a roast of pork, with crisply-browned skin, still sizzled in its own grease. By the woman's place, at the opposite end, stood a large agate tea-pot and a chunk of uncolored butter, upon whose surface salt crystals sparkled in the lamplight. The lamp was shaded by a sloping collar of scorched pasteboard, while the constant flicker of the yellow flame rendered tremulously uncertain the faces around the board.

Mauney's usual taciturnity, inspired by a feeling of being constantly misunderstood whenever he spoke, was increased by the pain in his hand, so that he sat in silence, catching the conversation of the others as something quite outside his own immediate consciousness. He was thinking about a new book the school teacher had loaned him.

"Well," remarked Bard, seizing his carving knife, and plunging his fork deep into the roast, "I guess this just about finishes the pig, don't it?"

"Yep. You'll have to kill to-morrow," the woman replied, as she reached for the hired man's tea cup. She noticed he was nibbling at an onion, which he had taken

from his pocket. "Ain't you afraid yer best girl will go back on you, Snowball?" she teased.

"Nope," he said with a weak-minded grin. "I d-don't never worry much about the women folks, so I don't!" He was a small-bodied, but wiry, individual of perhaps forty-five, with a scranny, wry neck and a burnished face of unsymmetrical design. The cervical deformity tilted his head sidewise and gave him an appearance of being in a constant attitude of listening, as if an unseen, but shorter, person were always beside him whispering in his ear. When he spoke he snapped his eyelids as if he alertly appreciated the full significance of his environment, and was perpetually on guard against the wiles of his associates.

"Hold on, Snowball!" William said, across the table, with a glare of mock earnestness, as he reached to sink his knife into the butter. "You know you're lyin.' All the pretty gals up to Beulah is crazy about you."

Snowball laughed a silent, internal kind of laugh that caused his shoulders to rise and fall in rapid jerks to its rhythm, and ended in its first audible accompaniment—a sound exactly like the suction of a sink-basin drawing in the last eddying portion of water.

"The gals is g-gone on you, Bill, not me!" he retorted, with much keen winking of his lids, and entered immediately on a second bout of noiseless, private laughter which terminated, after the others had forgotten his remarks, in the same astonishing sound.

"D'juh see the bay mare to-day, Bill?" Bard presently inquired, across the level of a wide slice of bread, from which he had bitten out a semi-circular portion. William looked up knowingly from his well-loaded fork

and nodded his head sagely with a slight lifting of his brows, as though an intimate understanding existed.

"I should say so. What are you going to do with her, Dad?" he asked.

Bard's slit-like eyes narrowed even more than usual, as for a moment, he chewed meditatively.

"Goin' to get rid of her," he said, with the careless quickness of one pronouncing expert opinion. "Sorry I raised her, Bill. Never liked her sire. Thompson never had much luck with that Percheron stud. He's been leadin' that horse around down the Clark Settlement, and I seen some o' the colts. All the same!"

"What's the matter with the bay mare?" Mauney enquired anxiously.

"She's goin' to be sold—that's what's the matter with her!" he replied curtly. "And I don't want to hear no growlin', understand me!"

"I wasn't growling."

"No—but you was a-thinkin' in them terms."

"Well, I thought she was mine, Dad. You gave her to me when she was a colt. I never thought so much of any animals as I do of her, and, more than that, I never noticed anything wrong with her."

"H'm!" sneered Bard. "You got to go into farmin' a little deeper'n you do, to notice anything."

Outside the door, the dog growled, then barked in an unfriendly tone. The sound of a horse's hoofs in the lane and the squeaking of a buggy caused them to stop eating.

"Dave McBratney!" William announced presently, glancing through the window into the twilight. "I'd know that horse if I seen it in hell."

Bard, after first loading his mouth, rose to open the door.

"Good evenin', Dave!" he said.

"Good night, Mr. Bard," came a young man's voice. "Wait till I tie up this here hoss. He's liable to run away."

This provoked laughter around the table which lasted until McBratney, a tall, dashing youth with playful, black eyes, stepped into the kitchen and greeted the people with individual nods. A slight discoloration of his lips indicated that he was chewing tobacco. He wore a black, soft hat, with its rim pulled down in front, and the tip of a peacock feather stuck into the sweat-stained band at one side. Beneath his jacket, a grey flannel shirt with soft collar boasted a polka-dot bow-tie and a heavy watch chain, whose large golden links connected two breast pockets. From the handkerchief pocket of his coat, protruded the border of a red bandanna and the stem of a pipe.

"Been up to Beulah?" William asked.

"Yep!"

"Anything new?"

"Nothin' much, Bill," replied McBratney, as he seated himself in the low, yellow rocking-chair and began to teeter back and forth. "The only stir is the new preacher, I guess. I heard he was comin' down the Lantern Marsh this afternoon to make some calls."

"I reckon that's why you cleaned out, Dave!" said Bard.

"You bet; but they say he's quite a nice, sociable little chap. Joe Taylor was telling me in Abe Lavanagh's barber shop that he seen the new preacher up at the post office, waitin' for the mail to be distributed. He

says he was grabbin' right aholt o' everybody's paw, just like a regular old-timer."

"What's his wife like, Dave?" Bard enquired.

"I don't know. Dad was sayin' last night, it don't matter about the preacher so much; it all depends on his wife, whether they're goin' to take with the people."

"Surely," agreed Bard. "You take McGuire who was here before Squires. McGuire may have had his faults—I'm not sayin' he didn't—but he wasn't too bad a little fellow at all. But that wife o' his—why, she'd a' ruined any man!"

"Lap-dogs!" laughed McBratney.

"Sure, and you'd a' thought she had some kind o' royal blood in her the way she'd strut down the sidewalk." Bard delved in his hip pocket for his pipe as he pushed his chair back from the table. "A preacher's wife," he continued philosophically, but with his usual oracular impressiveness, "has got to be sort o' human-like. Did you hear what happened to McGuire?"

"No."

Bard, his empty pipe perched between his teeth, blew several quick blasts of air through it to clear it of sticky contents, while he cut fine shavings of tobacco from a plug with a large-bladed jack-knife.

"I was talkin' to somebody who had been out west," he continued, "and McGuire was runnin' a real estate office, makin' money too."

McBratney reserved his comment until he had gone to the door to spit. "That's a nice job for a preacher to go into, Mr. Bard," he said, sarcastically. "I guess he wasn't called of the Lord."

"I never blamed him!" Bard exclaimed, striking the table with his stubby right hand, from which the middle

fingers were gone. "No, sir! He showed the man in him. But there's just one thing more I'd a' done!"

"What's that, Dad?" William asked.

Bard leaned eagerly forward and clenched his fists. "I'd a' got that prig of a woman cornered up between me and the end of the room, and I'd a' choked her till she was green in the face, and then I'd a' handed over all her lap-dogs an' yellow parasols and I'd a' shot her right out onto the road!"

"You're damned right," approved McBratney.

"You bet," agreed William Bard.

The humor of his master's threat had evidently appealed very forcibly to Snowball, for, after a few seconds, he emitted the queer suction sound, heralding the termination of his period of mirth.

A few minutes later they all left the kitchen for the dairy shed, where the cows waited to be milked. Maaney, disabled for milking, pumped water and carried pails. He noticed McBratney conversing in low tones with his brother, who occasionally turned up the cow's teat to sprinkle Rover with a warm spray of milk.

When the milking was finished, the cows were wandering slowly back toward the pasture and William had driven off toward Beulah with his companion, Maaney entered the stable and unfastened the latch of a box-stall.

"Whoa, Jennie girl!" he said softly.

The mare, crunching hay, turned her head, whinnied, and stepped over for him to come in. In the dim light that entered from a cobwebbed window he could just see her big eyes watching him, as he put out his hand and stroked her sleek neck. She was his great pride, for, since the day she had been given to him, he had

watered and fed her himself, brushed and washed her and led her to pasture. She was the only living thing that he had regarded as his very own, but to-night he felt uncertain about his claim. Quickly he ran his hand over her legs, patted her chest and listened to the sound of her breathing.

"There's nothing wrong with you, Jennie, girl," he said as he took a fork and threw straw about the floor of the stall.

It was as if he was being robbed of an old friend. Her face haunted him as he went back to the kitchen where his father and the woman were discussing a new cream separator; and when he went upstairs to his room he could see the dark eyes of his pony looking toward him with pathetic appeal.

If his father and brother were studying to render his life miserable, he thought, they would not improve on their present success. What had he done to deserve their constant dislike? If he picked up a book he had learned to expect their ridicule. If he were detected in a mood of quiet reflection, a seemingly normal occupation, why should he have learned to expect a sarcastic jeer? He felt that his mother, had she but lived, would have understood better, for her nature was more like his own.

In such a mood of discontent he sat idly on the edge of his bed, striving to find some possible fault of his own that might merit his evident ostracism. Previously, the possession of his bay pony had given him unbelievable comfort, for in moments of suppressed exasperation he had gone to her stall and transferred, with gentle pattings, the affection that he was prevented from bestowing on his kin. "We're old chums, aren't we, Jen-

nie?" Then the world would look brighter and consolation would come to him. But the prospect of her being sold to a stranger made him very sad.

Presently a horse and buggy drove up the lane and stopped almost beneath him. Mauney opened the window to listen, since he knew it was too early for William to be returning.

"Who's that?" he heard his father's voice enquire.

"Is this where Mr. Bard lives?" enquired a strange, but cultured voice.

"You bet."

"I'm your pastor, Mr. Bard," the strange voice continued. "And if you have a few moments, I'll come in just long enough to get acquainted. It's a little late, but I didn't think you'd be in bed yet. I'll just tie her here, thanks. My name, as I presume you've heard, is Tough, but I'm not as tough as I look."

"How are yu', Mr. Tough?"

"Fine, thanks."

"There's nobody here, but me an' the hired woman—but—"

"No matter! I'll take you as I find you. I understand that Mrs. Bard died some years since."

"Yes. My wife wasn't never very strong, an' I never married again."

"Very sad, indeed. We can't always tell what's behind these things, but we try to think they happen for a purpose."

In Mauney's breast something tightened at these words. Dim recollections of his mother's faded face, so thin, but so ineffably sweet, as she closed her eyes in their interminable rest, made him wonder if her going had not been better than staying—staying with the man

who had looked, dry-eyed, upon her dead face! Staying to share the unhappiness of her younger son! A wave of joy thrilled him. For one thing he would remain for ever glad—that his mother was dead, safely dead—out of his father's reach!

He did not know how long he had stood by the window, but he presently heard the kitchen door open.

"That's one of Tom Sunderland's livery horses, ain't it, Mr. Tough?"

"Yes, and he's very slow and lazy. As a matter of fact I wanted to mention horses to you."

"You ain't got a horse o' yer own, then?"

"Not yet. You might know perhaps where I could get a reliable pony, quiet enough for Mrs. Tough?"

"Now, Mr. Tough, maybe I might. I suppose you want a purty good piece o' horse flesh?"

"Well, yes, I do."

"Wife a horse fancier, Mr. Tough?"

"Oh, she's fond of driving; yes."

A slight pause, during which Bard coughed.

"It's purty hard," he said, clearing his throat, "to buy a horse that's a good roadster and at the same time a good looker an' quiet like; understand me."

"Just so."

"Now I've got a three-year-old mare here that ain't never been beat in these here parts for looks. O' course, I ain't never even thought o' sellin' 'er. She was sired by the best Percheron that was ever led around this section."

"Something fancy, I imagine."

"She lifts her feet like a lady; she's fast, and intelligent more'n the hired man."

"What's she worth?"

Bard laughed. "Well," he replied "I hardly know, as I say, I never thought o' lettin' 'er go."

"But you could give me some idea."

"I know I turned down a three-hundred-dollar offer a couple o' months ago."

The Reverend Tough whistled softly.

"The Lord's servants," he said, "are notoriously lacking in the world's goods, Mr. Bard. I fear I would have to seek a cheaper animal."

There was a well-considered pause before Bard spoke.

"You better come down and see her in the daylight," he said. "You might not want her. But I'd like to see you with a good horse—your profession calls for it."

"I think so, too."

"And when it comes to that, I wouldn't be against knocking off, say, a hundred, if you really want her."

"Really! That's good of you. Now, look here, Mr. Bard, I'll come down to-morrow and see her. It's comforting to know that a man in these days can get a little for love, when he hasn't got the price."

With mutual expressions of good will their conversation ended and Mauney listened to the preacher's buggy squeaking down the clay road toward Beulah. He walked to the front window of his room and watched it until it disappeared in the mist that had blown westward from the swamp. Then his gaze moved to the Lantern Marsh, a grey, desolate waste under a fog through which the moon struggled. His nature recoiled from the hated picture.

Soon he slept. He dreamed of his father—and of a warm stream of blood he could not see, but only feel in his hands.

CHAPTER II.

TEACHERS AND PREACHERS.

*"Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect."—Keats, "Hyperion" (1820
Edition).*

THE sultry heat of the April noon rose in tremulous vibrations from the barnyard, next day, when for a moment, absolute silence prevailed. From beneath his sun-splashed hat the shaded face of Bard scowled into the blue shadow of the barn where Mauney stood indolently biting at the end of a wisp of timothy.

"What are yuh mopin' about?" Bard called sharply. "Wake up! I don't want no more o' this here mopin', understand me. The mare is sold and that's the end of it. Shake a leg, there, and go hitch up Charlie. You've got to drive up to Beulah an' get this here cheque into the bank afore it closes. D'juh hear?"

Past the end of the kitchen Mauney's eye caught the retreating figure of his pony being led up the clay road behind the preacher's buggy. His dishevelled auburn hair was stuck to his glistening forehead, and his clear blue eyes burned with an emotion that gave a bitter firmness to his lips. Before he could pull himself from his mood his father had come with rapid strides near him.

"Are you goin' to move?" he fiercely demanded, his eyes glaring hatred. "Or am I goin' to move yuh?"

Mauney calmly ignored his threat, while his eyes focused indifferently on the cheque in his father's hand.

"D'yuh want me to mess up yer pretty face?" fumed Bard.

"I'm not just a slave of yours," said Mauney deliberately, with a perceptible straightening of his body, as he turned to enter the stable door.

"You better move, young fellow," said Bard, following him. "Here, take this cheque. And mind you get back in time to finish that fence or you'll work in the moon-light."

Mauney drove off in a dazed state of mind, wondering if his lot were but typical of human life in general, or if, by some chance he had been born into an exceptionally disagreeable home. He wondered what particular power enabled him to bear the insulting treatment invariably accorded him and whether that mysterious force would always continue to serve him. He had tried faithfully to look for likeable traits in his father's character. He admired his strength of purpose—that terrible will that drove him through his long days of labor under hot suns—and felt that he was very capable. He knew that the farm would always be skilfully run under his father's guidance, but this was the full statement of his filial faith. For beyond this cold admiration there was no attraction, no hint of warm regard.

At the end of the swamp the road curved to the left in a broad bend, giving a view of the shining tin roofs of Beulah, on a hill two miles before him. Nearby stood the Brick School House, with its little bell-tower, its white picket fence, its turnstile and bare-worn playground, the neat pile of stove-wood by the weather-stained shed at the rear, and the two outhouses by the

corners of the lot. As he drew nearer the bell rocked twice, giving out its laconic signal for noon recess. In a moment a scramble of children with tin lunch-pails poured forth, running to selected spots under the bare maples.

"Hello, Maaney," came a familiar voice from the door as he passed.

"Are you going up to the village, Miss Byrne?" he asked, lifting his hat.

"I'd like to?" she smiled.

"Come on," he invited, cramping the horse to the other side, that she might more conveniently enter.

Miss Jean Byrne was a graceful young woman whose manner breathed unusual freshness. Her oval face possessed a certain nun-like beauty, chiefly by reason of her deep hazel eyes, quiet emblems of a devotional disposition. Her good color, however, and an indulgent fulness of lips, saved her face from an ultra-spirituality and her low, contralto laughter neutralized a first impression of asceticism. Maaney had never noticed that she was really quite a large woman, although he had been a pupil in her school for two years.

"How goes it, Maaney?" she asked, having noticed an unwonted sadness in his face, usually so bright.

"Not too badly. I'm enjoying that book you lent me," he replied, with a smile.

"Come now—something's wrong," she said, searching his face as they drove along together.

"I'm feeling sore to-day," he admitted, striking the wheel with his whip. "My father sold my pony to the preacher, and I'm not going to forgive him. It was my pony. He hadn't any right to sell it."

After a pause he turned and looked into her eyes. "I guess we all have our little troubles, Miss Byrne, eh?"

She understood him. In fact Miss Byrne held him more intimately in her quiet thoughts than he surmised, and more intimately than their ages and contact would have explained. She had often stood over him, during his last term, observing the mould of his shoulders under his loose, flannel shirt, instead of the book on his desk. She had often lost the thread of her instructions in the unconscious light of his blue-eyed day-dreaming. Then, too, his English compositions had displayed such merit that she had marvelled at his ability, and wondered whether environment were really as strong an influence as heredity in forming a pupil's mind. Every teacher who is fortunate has one pupil who becomes the oasis in the daily desert of thankless toil, the visible reward of seeds sown in darkness. Mauney Bard was easily her oasis and reward. She always maintained that there were only two classes of pupils who impressed their teacher, the noisy, empty ones and the "dog" kind. The canine qualities she meant were silent faithfulness and undemonstrative affection.

Her wistful eyes softened with delicate sympathy as she glanced at his clean profile, and she thought of a sculptor's marble. But whenever he turned toward her, it was the trusting simplicity of a youth talking with his mother. Mother! It was forced upon her, so that her breast warmed with medleys of sensation.

"Oh, what's wrong with your hand?" she asked.

"Nothing much—I jabbed it on a nail yesterday."

"Aren't you doing anything for it?"

"Annie's the doctor—that's our hired girl."

"Mauney Bard, you go straight to the doctor's," she said. "You might lose your arm, or even your life, if it becomes inflamed."

He looked at her quizzically, and then nodded with a smile. "All right," he agreed.

The horse broke into a walk at the foot of the big hill, leading up to the main street of Beulah. At the top the thoroughfare with its bare archway of maples came into view. The houses were characteristic of the residential section, set back beyond lawns and well separated, although here and there small grocery stores were to be seen with well-filled windows and idle, white-aproned proprietors. As they passed the double-windowed front of the Beulah weekly, the blatant explosions of a gasoline engine indicated that the journal was on press. A little further along a lamp-post bearing a large coal-oil lamp stood by the board side-walk, with a signboard nailed at right angles to the street, displaying in large black letters the name "Doctor Horne," while the physician's residence, a neat stone house with black pencilled mortar, looked out from a grove of basswood trees.

"Do you know Dr. Horne?" she enquired.

He nodded.

"There he is now," she said, "He's certainly an odd genius. Look at the sleeves!"

Horne was a big, solid man of sixty, with jet-black hair under his grey cloth cap, and jet-black, bushy eyebrows raised airily. His neat, black moustache was pushed forward in a mock-careless pout. He walked with great speed, as if engrossed completely in his thoughts, but with an air of picturesque indifference, as if his thoughts were entirely lightsome. At intervals

he tugged at his coat sleeves, first one and then the other, a nervous eccentricity of no significance except that it kept his coat cuffs near his elbows, displaying his white shirt sleeves for the amusement of other pedestrians. Beulah never tired of this sexagenarian bachelor. He drove a horse as black as his own hair and demanded the same degree of speed from it as from himself, namely, the limit. When starting on a country call he would jump into his buggy and race to the border of the village, beyond which the journey was made more leisurely, while on his return the whip was not taken from its holder until the houses came in sight. The Beulahite pausing on the street to watch him would remark with a chuckle:

"There goes Doc. Horne, hell-for-leather!"

Mauney left Miss Byrne at the post-office, visited the bank, and drove directly back to the doctor's, hitching his horse to the lamp-post. The office was a smaller portion of the house at one side, which Mauney approached. He rang the bell.

"Come in out of that!" immediately came the doctor's heavy voice.

Mauney stepped into an office furnished with several leather chairs, a desk on which reposed a skull, a safe holding on its top a stuffed loon, an open bookcase filled with dusty volumes of various colors, and a phalanx of bottles against one wall from which radiated a strong odor of drugs. He looked about in vain for the doctor.

"Sit down, young fellow!" came a stern command from the adjoining surgery. In a moment or two the big physician bustled out, and, stopping in front of Mauney's chair, stared down at him savagely as if he

were the rankest intruder, meanwhile smoking furiously and surrounding himself with blue cigar smoke.

"Say!" he said, at length, jerking the cigar roughly from his mouth. "Who the devil are you?"

"Mauney Bard!"

"Oh, God, yes! Of course you are. Of course you are!" Horne spluttered, walking impulsively to the book-case and rivetting his attention on the binding of a book.

"So you're one of Seth Bard's curses, eh?" he said, at length, in a preoccupied tone, with his back still turned to Mauney. "Been fighting?"

"No, doctor, I ran a nail in my hand," he replied, with a smile.

Horne shuffled a pace to his left to transfer his keen attention to another bookbinding, which so completely absorbed him that Mauney was sure he had forgotten his patient. After what seemed five minutes, Horne turned about and, going to his desk, plumped himself down into a swivel-chair. His eye-brows nearly touched the line of his hair as his black eyes stole to the corner of his lids in a sly study of his patient.

"Nail eh? Rusty?"

Mauney commenced undoing the bandage.

"Hip! Hip!" admonished Horne. "I didn't tell you to take that off. Wait till I tell you, young fellow. Lots of time. Rusty?"

"Yes, doctor."

"Come in here!"

Horne jumped up and went into the surgery. He quickly cut away the crude bandage and merely glanced at the wound.

"Soreness go up your arm, young fellow?"

"Yes, a little bit."

"Uh—Hum!"

Horne clasped his arms behind his back and stamped dramatically up and down the surgery, rattling the instruments in their glass case by the wall. Suddenly he faced Mauney.

"How would you like to lose your arm, young man?" he asked seriously.

"I'd hate to."

"Then I'm going to open up that wound freely," he said, walking toward the instrument case. "Do you want to take chloroform?"

"No—I think I can stand it."

Horne selected a knife and pulling a hair out of his head tried its edge.

"She's sharp—damned sharp!" he remarked, dropping the instrument into a basin of solution. "You think you can stand it, eh? Remember, I offered you chloroform."

Presently he picked the knife out of the basin.

"Come here, you. Put your hand in that solution. Hold it there a minute. Does it nip?"

Mauney nodded.

"Well, let it nip. Now take your hand out. Stand up straight. Hold it out here."

Horne pressed the blade deeply into the tissues, then withdrew it. Looking up into his patient's face:

"Did you feel it?"

"Just a little, Doctor," said Mauney, biting his lip.

"Don't you faint, Bard!"

"I'm not going to."

"Yes you are!"

"I am not!" insisted Mauney as the color returned to his face.

While the doctor put on a fresh dressing his manner altered. He whistled a snatch of a country dance.

"You look like your mother, boy," he said more gently. "I looked after your poor mother. You were just a young gaffer then. She was a very fine woman. She was too damned good for your old man. I've told Seth that before now."

"Will this need to be dressed again?" Mauney asked, as they later stood in the waiting room.

"Yes. On Saturday."

Horne's attention was drawn to the figure of a woman approaching the office.

"Hello!" he said softly. "Surely Sarah Tenent isn't sick. I'll bet she's peddling bills for the revival services."

The bell rang.

"All right, come in, Mrs. Tenent."

"How do you do, doctor?" she said, very deferentially, as she entered.

"Just about as I choose, Mrs. Tenent," he replied coldly, watching her minutely.

She took a large white paper notice from a pile on her arm.

"Will you serve the Lord," she asked with great soberness, "by hanging this in your office, doctor?"

He glanced over it and read aloud, very hurriedly: "Revival Services, Beulah Church, commencing Sunday. Rev. Francis Tooker and Rev. Archibald Gainford, successful evangelists, will assist the new pastor, Rev. Edmund Tough. Special Singing. Come."

He passed it back to her and shook his head.

"No, no—not here, I'd never hang it here. I have patients who are not of thy fold, Mrs. Tenent. My

function is to cure the sick. That sign would make some of them sicker. No, no."

The woman left the office in silent disapproval of Horne's attitude. Mauney put on his hat and was leaving the office, when the doctor appeared in the door behind him.

"Hold on, young chap!" he commanded. "Wait you! Didn't I see you driving into the village with a young lady?"

"I didn't think you noticed us," laughed Mauney.

"Who was she?"

"Miss Byrne. She teaches at the Brick School."

"Yes, yes. Of course she does. Fine young lady," he said, studying Mauney with much lifting of his brows and pouting of his lips. "But you're too young, Bard. Why don't you get somebody your own age?"

"Oh," Mauney said quickly, while his face flushed; "She's probably got a beau. It isn't me, anyway, doctor."

Horne, greatly amused at the emotional perturbation of his patient, chuckled, while his black eyes sparkled.

"Get along with you, Bard!" he said, "Get along home with you and don't forget to come up on Saturday, mind!"

The revival meetings became the talk of the countryside. Beulah, composed for the most part of retired farmers, had unusual leisure in which to think—a leisure captured by the glamor of religion, which was the strongest local influence. Although the village was a century old it had preserved, with remarkable success, the puritanism of the pioneer period, partly because it enjoyed so little touch with the commercial energies of the nation at large, and partly because the local churches

had remained diligent in spiritual service. But in a population so uniformly composed of idle folk, the general view-point lay itself open to become biased. There was too much emphasis on the ghostly estate and too little on the need of practical endeavor. Beulah had forgotten long since that the Church must have its lost world, else it becomes unnecessary, and to the average citizen, lulled as he was by surfeit of beatific meditation, the board sidewalks had begun to take on an aureate tinge, the houses, a pearly lustre. The spiritual concern of the religiously eager Beulahite had in it, unfortunately, no concept of national character, but was pointed sharply at the individual. His sense of personal security was only less unhealthy than his overbearing interest in the soul welfare of his neighbor. Saved by repeated redemptions himself, he remained strangely skeptical of the validity of the phenomenon in others. Hence, at fairly regular intervals, a general village consciousness of sin developed, becoming insistently stronger until it found its logical expression—the revival meeting.

Mauney, during the next week, listened to the religious talk of the community with mild curiosity. Mrs. McBratney, the pious mother of David, said to him one afternoon from the side of her buggy:

“I hope you’ll attend the revival meetings, Mauney. Your mother would want you to go. We are praying for great things.

“I’ve been on my knees for the young people,” she continued, “and I believe David has got conviction.”

Tears suddenly filled her eyes and her chin quivered with such tremulous emotion as to embarrass Mauney,

who could fancifully imagine that David had been smitten by a plague.

"I believe he will be converted," she managed to say, before her voice broke into a sob, "and I pray the Lord will show you the light, too, Mauney."

He felt that perhaps it would have been good form to say "Thank you," for he was sure her intentions were sterling, but he resented her reference to his mother, who seemed to him, in memory, a creature too much of sunshine and peace to be associated with anything so dolefully emotional.

He had never been a regular attendant at church. He remembered having sat beside his mother many times in the auditorium listening to unintelligible sermons and strenuous anthems. But from the day, five years ago, when as a chief mourner he had sat blankly stupefied, hearing comforting words that failed to comfort, and music whose poignant solemnity froze him with horrid fear, he had never been invited either by desire or family suggestion to return.

By the second week of the meetings David McBratney was reported to have been converted. He had stopped coming to see William as had been his custom. Neighbors said there could be no doubting the genuineness of his reformation for he had ceased chewing tobacco and was contemplating entry into the ministry of the Church. During supper at the Bard farm on Saturday evening a lull in the conversation was broken by a sarcastic laugh from William.

"Well, Dad, I guess they've got Dave," he said. "Abe Lavanagh was tellin' me to-day that Dave has went forward every night this here week. I never figured he'd get religion."

Bard philosophically chewed on the idea as he peered at the lamp through his narrow eyes.

"There is just two kinds of people," he asserted at length. "The fools and the damned fools. Now there's a boy who's got every chance of inheriting his old man's farm. And I'm tellin' you, Bill, it's a purty good piece o' land."

"You bet."

"Just about as good as is bein' cultivated this side of Lockwood. There ain't a stone left in the fields, but what's piled up in the fences. William Henry has slaved this here thirty years—got the mortgage cleaned up—and that barn o' his, Bill, why you couldn't build it to-day for five thousand!"

"No, nor six, Dad."

"Then look at the machinery the old man's got. I'm tellin' yuh Dave ain't goin' to drop into nothing like that, agin. William Henry must be seventy!"

"May be seventy-one, Dad."

"Anyhow he ain't goin' to last a great while longer. If I was Dave I'd forget this religion business. 'Taint goin' to get him nowhere. Ain't that right, Snowball?"

The hired man, having finished supper, was sitting back drowsily, but at the sound of his name he winked his eyes cautiously.

"I dunno," he said, "I don't never bother much about religion, so I don't!"

In Dr. Horne's office that week the subject of the revival came up while Mauney was having his hand dressed.

"Some queer people here in this one-horse town!" mused Horne. "Do you remember George Pert who died a couple or three years ago?"

"Lived down by the toll-gate?"

"That's him. Lazy as twelve pigs. Use to lie abed till noon. Wife kept a market garden. Never paid his doctor's bills. Yes, sir! George Pert! He got a cancer of the bowel, poor devil. Sick. Pretty far gone. I went in one day and found preacher Squires sitting by the bed. "Well, Mr. Pert," (Horne's voice assumed an amusing clerical solemnity) "'Are you trusting in the Lord?' George nods his head. 'Yes' says he, 'I'm so sartin o' salvation, that if only one person in Beulah is going to heaven I know it's me!'"

"They're a nosey bunch, here!" Horne continued, as he wound a bandage on Mauney's hand. "Self-satisfied! Let your light so shine—good! But don't focus your light into a red-hot spot to burn out your neighbor's gizzard. Last night Steve Moran came into the office and sat down. 'Doctor' says he, 'I just came in to see if your feet were resting on the Rock.' Says I, 'Steve, you blackguard, you owe me five dollars from your wife's last confinement, fifteen years ago. If you don't go to hell out o' here, you'll be resting in a long black box!'"

Mauney was surprised how much people talked about the revival. Enthusiasts carried out from the meetings, by their words and manner, an infectious fervor that directed the curious attention of others to the thing that was happening night by night in the Beulah church. Finally, on Sunday evening, he decided to see it for himself and drove to town. The church sheds were filled to overflowing so that he tied old Charlie to a fence post in the yard. Through the colored windows he heard the voluminous roar of voices lifted in the cadence of a hymn. The church was crowded. The

vestry at the entrance was full of waiting people and, through one of the doors leading to the auditorium, he glimpsed a sea of heads. At the farther end of the great room, in a low gallery, sat the choir, facing him, and below them on the pulpit platform three preachers were seated in red plush chairs. The seated congregation were singing an unfamiliar hymn whose rhythm reminded him of march music he had heard bands playing in Lockwood. Ushers were carrying in chairs to accommodate the overflow.

David McBratney, carrying an armful of red hymn books touched Mauney on the shoulder.

"Here's a book," he whispered, proffering one. "I'll get you a seat in a few minutes. Glad to see you here, Mauney."

McBratney's face glowed with a strange luminosity, puzzling to Mauney, and his speech and manner were quickened by nervous tension. Presently he led the way to a chair in the aisle.

At the end of a stanza one of the preachers jumped suddenly to his feet and interrupted the organ.

"You're not half singing!" he shouted angrily. "You can do better than that. If you haven't more voice than that, how do you expect the Lord to hear your words of praise? Now, on the next stanza, let yourself out. Ready!"

He raised both arms high above his head and, as the organ commenced, brought them to his side with such force that he was compelled to take a step forward to regain his balance. His words had the effect he desired, for a deafening volume of sound rose and fell quickly to the lilt of the march-music, suggesting to Mauney the image of neatly-uniformed cadets with stiffened backs

and even steps, moving along Lockwood streets on a holiday.

When the hymn ended, a soft hand touched Mauney on the arm and, looking to his right, he saw Jean Byrne seated in the end of the oaken pew directly next to him. She was just letting her closed hymnal drop into her lap.

"Glad to see you," she whispered, guarding her lips with her gloved hand.

One of the preachers rose slowly from his chair. He was a stout man of fifty, mild-appearing and pleasant, with clean-shaven face and grey hair. He walked forward to the edge of the carpeted platform, rested his elbow on the side of the pulpit and raised his face to gaze slowly over the quieting congregation. "My dear friends," he said in soft, silver tone, "I thank God for the hymn we have just been singing. It has been indeed very inspiring. Brother Tooker and myself have been in your little town for two weeks now, and have grown so fond of the people that we view to-night's meeting with inevitable feelings of regret, because, so far as we can see the divine guidance, it will be our last night with you. But we have also feelings of hope, because we are praying that there may be a great turning to God as a result of this meeting."

As he paused to shift his weight slowly to his other foot and clasp his hands behind his frock coat, the congregation was silent. Only the sound of a horse stamping in the shed could be heard.

"During our fortnight with you," he continued, "many souls have been led to the Cross. We thank God for that. But there are many more who are still living in sin—some of them are here to-night."

As his glance shifted over the mass of upturned faces, Mauney fancied he paused perceptibly as he looked his way.

"It is to you, who are in sin, that we bring a message of hope. You have only to take God at his word, who sent His Son to save that which was lost."

"Amen!" came a vigorous response from an old man in the front pew.

"You have only to believe on Him who is righteous and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Amen!" from near the back.

"Amen!" also, from the side, half-way up.

At this juncture a woman in the body of the auditorium burst forth, in good voice, singing the first verse of "Though your sins be as scarlet," whereat the preacher indulgently acquiesced, and waved for the congregation to join her. At the end of the first stanza he raised his hand.

"The lesson for to-night is taken from the first chapter of the beloved Mark." As he carefully read the passage of scripture the ushers were busy leading in more people, so that, when he finished, the floor was entirely filled save for two narrow aisles, one on either side, leading from the back to the altar railing.

The Reverend Francis Tooker, as he walked confidently forward, was seen to be tall and thin, with a long, florid face and a great mass of stiff, black hair. He raised his large, bony hand.

"Let every head be bowed!" he commanded, sharply.

After a short invocation he commenced his discourse. He dealt at length with the experiences of the prodigal son, pictured in adequate language the depths of pro-

fligacy to which he had sunk, stressed the moment of his decision to return home, and waxed touchingly eloquent over the reception which his father accorded him.

"And now, people," he said more brusquely, as he slammed shut the big pulpit Bible and ran his long fingers nervously through his hair. "You've got a chance to do what that boy did. You've been acting just the way he acted—don't dare deny it! You've been wallowing in the dirt with the pigs, and you're all smeared up. What are you going to do about it?"

The audience, keyed up to the former flow of his unfaltering eloquence, were now mildly shocked by the informality of his pointed question. He walked to the very edge of the platform while his eyes grew savage and his face red.

"What are you going to do about it?" he shouted, clenching his fists and half-squatting. Then, rising quickly, he hastened to the other side of the pulpit. "Are you going to arise and go to your Father? Or are you going to keep on mucking about with the pigs? Don't forget that for anyone of you this night may be your last. To-night, perhaps you" (he pointed), "or you," (he pointed again) "may be required to face God. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to die forgiven of your sins like a man, or are you going to shut your ears to the word of God and die like any other pig?"

No sound interrupted the intense silence. No one moved. Even the flickering lamps seemed to steady their illumination to a glaring, yellow uniformity.

Suddenly his manner altered. Moving to a position behind the pulpit he rested his elbows on the Bible and folded his hands together out over the front edge of

the book-rest, while his voice assumed a quiet, conversational tone.

"Remember that on this night, the twentieth day of April, 1914, you were given an opportunity to come out full-breasted for God. I have discharged my duty. The rest remains for you to do. If you are sorry for your sins, say so. If you regret the kind of life you've been leading, confess it. Come out and get washed off clean. The invitation is open. The altar awaits to receive you."

As he pointed to the altar railing, his black eyes flashed hypnotically.

"Those who have sinned, but are repentant and seek redemption, please stand."

For about ten seconds a great inertia possessed the seated congregation. Then two men stood up near the front of the pews, followed soon after by groups of both men and women in various parts of the auditorium, until, at length, only a sporadic rising here and there marked a new mood of hesitancy.

"While the choir sings," the preacher said softly, "I will ask you to steal away to the foot of the altar. The choir will please sing the first two verses of 'Come Ye Disconsolate,' and you who have, by standing, thus signified your desire for salvation, will move quietly forward and kneel by the railing."

As the slow, full chords of the hymn began the preacher's voice kept calling "Come away, Brother," and the standing penitents sought the narrow aisles and moved slowly forward to kneel with their heads touching the oaken railing. The Rev. Archibald Gainford and the Rev. Edmund Tough descended from the plat-

form to the crescent-shaped altar space and, bending down, spoke words of comfort to the suppliants.

As the choir stopped and the organ notes faded, the exhorter produced a silver watch and examined it, hurriedly.

"If we had more time," he said, "how many more would like to come forward? Please stand."

A dozen or more rose to their feet.

"Well," he said, with a smile, as he returned his watch to his pocket, "we have plenty of time. Come out, brother!"

Caught by this subtle snare, many of the presumably wavering individuals found it impossible to refuse his invitation, while a few sat down again.

When the meeting eventually drew to a close, after a long hymn, sung with the same exciting rhythm as the first one, Mauney rose with the rest and moved impatiently toward the door, walking beside Jean Byrne and talking to her of obvious matters. Her face, he noticed, was flushed and her eyes shining with unusual brightness from delicately moist lids, while her voice seemed husky and uncertain. The auditorium emptied slowly. The steps leading down from the front doorway to the walk presented the customary Sunday night groups of village beaux waiting to accompany their sweethearts home, or perhaps stroll with them through quiet, moonlit streets.

Beulah village council, anxious to keep taxes at a minimum, had never provided street-lighting, so that pedestrians, on dark nights, carried lanterns, unless they were lovers, in which case they relied either on moonlight or familiarity with the local geography.

Jean Byrne had come to the village in the buggy of

Mr. and Mrs. Fitch with whom she boarded on the Lantern Marsh road, but Mauney, being alone, invited her to drive down with him. She accepted and soon they were off together.

"I could have kicked over a pew in there to-night," said Mauney at length, tersely.

"I knew you wouldn't like it," she said. "Personally I think it's very unreal. Perhaps some people derive good from it, though."

"Perhaps. But it hasn't any connection with real life, Miss Byrne. I can't help feeling you've got to let the common daylight into things."

"That's good."

"It's easy enough to see how they get pulled into it," he went on. "There's a sort of excitement about it. I don't think one person by himself could get so excited."

"You mean there's a mob consciousness?"

"Yes, exactly—a lot of minds rubbing each other, like."

"I believe you've hit it, Mauney," she said. "I never thought of it like that before. How did you manage to think that out?"

"Well, I've always noticed, if I'm in a crowd, that it's hard for me to stay just as I am when I'm alone. Now, I hate people who are always chirping like chipmunks—you'll meet them at socials and dances. They don't say anything that matters and might better keep their mouths shut. But if I get with them I'll notice how it affects me, for after I leave I feel sort of weak."

"You must enjoy observing things like that, Mauney."

"No, I don't enjoy it," he replied. "That's just what I'm up against the whole time at home. My father and brother and the hired girl keep up an endless rattle of

talk, all the time, about things that aren't important. I keep quiet on purpose because I don't want to talk about them."

"What sort of things do they discuss?"

"Oh—the price of eggs, what somebody did with a certain horse, who married so-and-so and who she was before she did it, and whether the preacher's wife is human, and then they're always teasing Snowball; but he isn't such a fool as they think he is."

For a moment Miss Byrne studied Mauney's face, bright with moonlight.

"Well, what kind of things do you think are important?" she asked. "I mean what would you like to discuss, if you had your own way at home?"

"I couldn't say exactly," he said, reflectively. "But I'm discontented all the time, and feel ignorant. I want an education. I'm interested in history, most."

While she listened to his words, Miss Byrne was enjoying the landscape as they drove slowly along. It was no new thing for her to feel fresh attractions toward Mauney, but to-night, for some reason that she did not seek, she felt uncomfortably warm toward him, and presently her soft, gloved hand pressed his hand tenderly, and remained holding it. It came as a surprise to him, and he glanced quickly at her face, across which the sharp shadow of her hat formed a line just above her lips. He could distinguish her eyes turned away in the direction of the moonlit fields she was admiring, and her pretty lips, vivid and tender, sent a strange thrill through his body. Although he made no effort to draw away his hand, he disliked the situation as something he could not grasp. Lying helplessly captured, his fingers felt the heat of her hand. She had

stopped talking and he noticed her bosom moving as deeply as if she were asleep, but more quickly. He had the same feeling, for an instant, as in the meeting, of an outside power insidiously exciting his mind, but noticed with a definite sense of relief that they were nearing Fitch's gate. In a moment he freed his hand from hers and pulled up the horse.

"Mauney!"

She spoke his name in a low, unsteady voice and pressed her hand against his arm. That she was not warning him of some sudden obstacle in their way, was clear, for, on looking toward the road, he saw nothing. When he turned to her, her hat was hiding her bowed face and her hand was relaxing slowly—so very slowly—and falling from his arm. The emotion that caused her breathing to be broken by queer, jerky pauses mystified him.

"Are you ill, Miss Byrne?" he ventured to ask, and noticed that his own voice was tremulous.

She shook her head slowly and began to climb out of the buggy. "No, Mauney boy," she replied softly. "I was just lonesome, I guess. Goodnight!" He was puzzled. As he drove along he grew exceedingly impatient. There were so many things, he thought, beyond his comprehension.

CHAPTER III.

MAUNEY MEETS MRS. DAY.

*"A pretty woman is a welcome guest."—Byron,
"Beppo."*

WHEN he reached home, Mauney found his father talking in the kitchen with William Henry McBratney while the hired girl lay on the sofa with the cat asleep on her bosom. His father, seated with his socked feet resting on the stove damper and his chair tilted back, looked up as he entered from the yard.

"Well," he addressed him, "I hope to God you didn't get it."

"Get what?" asked Mauney, surprised at being noticed, and irked by his father's abrupt manner.

"You wasn't in a place where you'd be likely to get a bottle of whiskey, was you?" Bard quickly responded.

"Oh— you mean religion, Dad?"

Without further acknowledgment of Mauney's presence than a sarcastic motion of his head, Bard addressed his neighbor.

"I guess that's about all he'd get up to Beulah church, ain't it, William Henry?"

"Yes, sir, that's about the size of it, Seth!" admitted McBratney, smacking the arm of the chair with his bony palm, as if one would naturally expect to get a variety of commodities at Beulah church. He possessed an evil, circular face, with gray hair falling untidily over a low forehead. His long, thin legs seemed largest at

the knee-joints as he sat with difficulty in the low rocking-chair, and his long, brown neck, with its prominent Adam's apple, gave his small, ball-like head an unreal appearance of detachment. When he spoke, in his high-pitched, rasping voice, his Adam's apple shifted up and down his throat as if it were a concealed bucket bringing the words up from his body.

"That's about the size of it, I tell yuh!" he repeated. "And when they get religion, Seth, why there ain't no good tryin' to drill any reason into 'em!"

Mauney stood in the door leading to the former dining-room, watching McBratney's small eyes shine with wicked animation.

"As I was tellin' yuh," he went on, "the woman wouldn't let up on him, day ner night, pesterin' the life out o' the boy, goin' into her room there off the kitchen an prayin' like she was tryin' to ward off a cyclone."

He suddenly bent forward, so that his long hands nearly touched the floor, suggesting to Mauney an enraged orang-outang looking through the bars of his circus cage.

"An' now that she's got her way, what do you think?"

Bard knocked the bowl of his pipe against the edge of the stove.

"God only knows! What?" he said.

"Dave's made up his mind to go preachin'!"

"I heard that," admitted Bard with a sly smile. "I s'pose you'll be proud to have a son o' yours called of the Lord, eh?"

"Called o' nothing!" declared McBratney, hammering the chair arm with his fist, then settling back, with much silent movement of his Adam's apple. "I've tried to reason with him, but his mind is stopped workin' or else

it's workin' just a little bit too fast fer me. I think he's just framin' an excuse to leave the farm."

"Give him a few weeks, William Henry," suggested Bard. "He may get over this here frenzy o' his. Dave always struck me as a purty sharp lad an' I reckon it's only temporary, like."

The hired girl looked up from her idle occupation of stroking the cat's fur.

"Many folks out to church, Maun?" she asked.

Bard, as though he resented her speaking to his son, made a gesture toward the table.

"Here, Annie," he said authoritatively, "Go cut up a loaf o' bread and set out a bowl of preserves. Me and William Henry is goin' to have a bite to eat."

Up in his own room, Mauney later tried to read a small book Miss Byrne had given him. It was a leather-bound copy of Thomas á Kempis. He wondered why she had chosen such a gift, for the subject matter was too cloistral. Tossing it aside, he picked up an Ancient History she had recently loaned him and became absorbed in it until he was able to forget some of the things that rankled in his breast, among others, Jean Byrne's peculiar manner in the buggy. Lying with his head propped on a pillow he read until his eyes ached. In fancy he lived in ancient palaces among courtiers and councillors, saw the regalia of royal fêtes, through which came the sound of war trumpets. He read of ambitious sculptors whose names were written on the roster of deathless fame and saw steel engravings of their work—headless, armless torsos, nicked and cracked by the ravage of centuries. He saw conquerors leading stalwart armies, deciding the fate of nations. The story held him to the last page and he saw that the aspirations

of a mighty nation were dead; the rising star of ambition was quenched in its ascent; and only a vast pile of melancholy tokens remained to interest scholars who delved with spades. And he went to sleep in great wonderment as to what it all signified.

A few days later he took the Ancient History to return it to Miss Byrne. As he approached Fitch's gate on foot, he heard Jean's low laughter, and on passing between the lilac hedges, saw her on the front verandah with Mrs. Fitch.

"Good evening," he said, "you both seem to be enjoying yourselves."

"Come and sit down, Mauney. Mrs. Fitch has just been convulsing me with a story from real life," she invited, her eyes red from laughter. "What have you been doing to-day?"

"Oh, the same old stuff," he replied, nodding slyly towards Mrs. Fitch, busy with long, white knitting-needles. "I thought I'd stroll over and hear the latest scandal."

Mrs. Fitch was a woman of fifty, with scrupulously tidy grey hair, a square jaw, silver spectacles and thin lips suggesting latent deviltry.

"Wal, Maun," she said, without looking up from her rapidly-interplying ivory-points, "we ain't *accurate* scandal-mongers. Not the kind that talk about folks for the sake of harmin' them. But things do strike us peculiar like, at times, and gives our livers a healthy shakin' up. I've just been telling Miss Byrne about the young Hawkins brat." She paused and cast a sharp glance over the tops of her glasses. "You know him?" she asked.

Mauney nodded and smiled, for it was common know-

ledge that the son of Miss Lizzy Hawkins could not claim, with any degree of accuracy, the paternal factor of respectability enjoyed by most children.

"Wal," she resumed, her eyes returning to the line of her knitting, "young Hawkins was a-playin' in the road out here after school. Along comes William Henry McBratney drivin' the old, grey horse. He sees the Hawkins boy and he pulls up and he says, says 'e, "Where's your father, you young brat!" Young Hawkins, of course, didn't know him—hasn't brains enough to know anybody, but, after a minute of heavy thinkin' he looks up at McBratney and he says, says 'e, "Maw told me, me father was down in South Americky workin' on a steam roller, but I heard her tellin' me grandmother as how me father's name is William Henry McBratney!"

Mauney laughed as Mrs. Fitch soberly glanced over her spectacles again.

"And then," she resumed, "old William Henry leans half out of his buggy, waving his whip and shouting, without knowing as how he had an audience: 'Tell yer mother to keep her damned mouth shut, you brat!'

"I guess it's true enough," she went on presently, pulling a string of yarn from the revolving ball in her lap. "And then people talk about Dave McBratney for getting converted. It was the best thing he ever done! If I was a son of William Henry's I'd get converted before you could say Jack Robinson."

Mauney had never so little enjoyed talking with Jean Byrne as to-night. The episode of Sunday evening had left a distasteful flavor in his mind, for, although he tried to forget it, the incident kept flashing back upon his memory. He was left alone on the veran-

dah with her presently, and immediately felt an awkwardness, hard to overcome. Hitherto, she had always been just his teacher. But to-night, dressed in a yellow-flowered frock, with a pale yellow ribbon holding her dark hair down on her brow, she had lost a quality of dignity. He noticed also a hundred fine lights of tenderness in her eyes that he had never seen before.

He talked with her a few minutes and gave back the history.

"Let me get you another book," she said, starting toward the door.

"Please don't bother—just now, Miss Byrne," he said.

"Why not, Mauney?"

"I'm so busy I haven't time to read," he lied.

He thought afterward that in that moment when he refused to accept her kindness she divined perfectly the underlying feeling. It was his last conversation with Jean Byrne. He went home quite sadly. There was no surfeit of comforts in that home of his, to be sure, which could render him careless of helpful friendships: but, although he felt the significance of refusing her offer, knowing it meant the end of things between them, his sadness was over the seeming weakness in her that had caused his dislike. He might not have been so astonished at other women. But of Jean Byrne he had expected differently.

His life in the Lantern Marsh thus robbed of one more brightness became the more uninteresting. He felt the need of companionship. Struggling through long days of planting, sowing, and haying, he forced back the tug of expanding desires that urged him to different pursuits. In the evenings he would stand looking down the road that led to Lockwood, wishing that

he were travelling it never to return. To Lockwood, to Merlton beyond, to the world. He dreamed of a different life from his own, where people were gentle, where they knew things and would be willing to teach him out of their knowledge. But these dreams were folded to rest each night in heavy sleep and the light of each morning found them dissipated. He wanted books, but there was no library in Beulah. He had no money of his own and knew the foolishness of asking his father for it.

At the end of June, Jean Byrne returned to her home in Lockwood, and Mrs. Fitch remarked to him one day that she was not coming back, but was going to be married in the autumn to a doctor in her own town. Mrs. Fitch was curious, no doubt, to discover a reason for Mauney's never having come back to see her again.

"Miss Byrne was a good teacher, Maun," she said, as they talked in the Beulah post-office, "and I think she was powerful fond o' you, boy. She told me once as how she expected you would some day make your mark in the world."

Mauney felt tears welling into his eyes and turned away from her without further comment. He drove home blaming himself for having been rude to Jean Byrne. Her confidence in him, expressed through Mrs. Fitch, had come as sharp reward for his ingratitude. And yet, was it his fault?

On a sultry July evening an unexpected break in the monotony of his life occurred. He was sitting alone on the front steps of the farm-house, having just come in from the fields, when his attention was attracted by a cloud of dust on the Lockwood road. A motor car was travelling rapidly along and as it drew near, slackened

its speed. When it stopped directly at the foot of the orchard he surmised the people in it had paused for directions. A woman in the back seat waved to him and he quickly responded.

They were all strangers, the man at the wheel and the two women in the rear seat, although he felt there was something quite familiar about the grey-haired woman sitting nearest him.

"Is this where the Bards live?" she asked a little nervously. She was a small-bodied woman of perhaps fifty with very fine features, and clear, blue eyes that smiled pleasantly through rimless spectacles and the fawn motor veil that covered her face.

"Yes," Mauney replied, gazing curiously at her, and then at the others.

The man, chewing the end of an unlighted cigar, looked at the house with a frown and then glancing backward said in a low tone:

"Well, suit yourself, Mary. You might regret it if you didn't."

The woman, presumably his wife, looked with an undecided expression toward the house, as if she feared it.

"Is your name Bard, please?" she asked, raising her veil, and minutely inspecting Mauney's face.

"Yes," he said, glancing again at the others.

"He looks the dead image of her!" the other woman remarked prosaically to the man.

"And are you Mauney?" asked his interlocutor.

His brow was puckered with a dawning idea that soon caused his face to brighten up.

"Are you my Aunt Mary?" he asked, eagerly.

"How did you know?"

He came nearer and took her extended hand.

"Mauney, this is your Uncle Neville, and this is your Uncle's sister, Jane Day. This must be quite an extraordinary surprise to you, isn't it?"

Mauney nodded.

"Aren't you going to stay?" he asked. "When did you come to this country?"

"We came about a week ago, Mauney. Your Uncle Neville is over on business, and our headquarters are in Merlton. We motored all the way from Merlton to-day just to see where—where you lived, you know."

"You must be tired. What time did you leave?"

"About seven this morning, but the country has been simply beautiful, every inch of the way."

"Come in. Put your car in the shed. 'I'll go and tell my father."

"Wait!" said his aunt. "Just let's talk a moment. You've got a brother, but I've forgotten his name."

"William."

"Of course—how stupid of me to forget! Did you ever receive a letter I wrote you, Mauney, just after your mother died?"

"No, I don't remember getting one," he replied, with an expression of curiosity.

"That's strange. Apparently it went astray. But I always wondered—but then I wrote you again, Mauney, about three years ago. Didn't you get that?"

He shook his head.

"Funny!" she said, looking toward her husband.

"There's nothing funny about trans-Atlantic mails, my dear," said Mr. Neville Day, lighting his cigar. "It's got well past the funny stage with me."

"And then I sent you a postcard once, I remember. Didn't you even get that, Mauney?"

"I don't remember it."

"Well, anyway, we're here," she said, with sudden decision. "And if I don't see him, I'll always wish I had."

"All right, Mary," said Neville Day. "Now stick to that, my dear. Would you mind telling your father there's somebody here to see him, Mauney?"

"Certainly," Mauney agreed, turning to leave.

"Oh, wait!" called his aunt. "Wait a minute. You know I—I don't think I can see him, Neville. No, I can't. I really cannot."

The uncle smoked calmly, studying his finger-nails, while Mauney stood riddled with curiosity.

"Come here, dear," said his aunt. "Promise me not to mention us to your father. We aren't going in, and it's—it's so hard to explain why we aren't."

Neville Day and Miss Jane Day got out of the car and walked slowly along the edge of the road together. His aunt asked Mauney to get in the rear seat and sit beside her. As she turned toward him, he could see his mother's likeness with startling vividness.

"Your mother used to write to me about you, Mauney," she said. "You were her favorite, I'm glad you're such a big fellow. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"It's terrible how the time goes. I suppose you're happy and well all the time—"

He gauged the expression in her eyes. He felt completely at home with her. She looked so much like his mother that he wanted to remain with her endlessly.

"Well, Aunt Mary," he said slowly, "I'm not very happy, I'm afraid."

"What's wrong?" she asked sympathetically.

"I don't know."

"Does your father treat you all right?"

"I think he tries to, Aunt Mary, but since my mother died, I've always been—dissatisfied. How long are you going to stay—I mean here?"

"We'll have to return to Lockwood—is that the name?"

He nodded.

"We'll go back there for the night and return to Merlton, to-morrow."

"Why won't you come in, and see my father?" he asked.

"Well you see, Mauney, it's—it's so late, you know."

Her explanation was patently false, for he saw her face struggle to remain composed, and then noticed a queer hardness come upon it.

"Do you know where the old Conyngham place is?" she asked.

"Sure. Over there!" he pointed to a field not far away.

"You knew about that, didn't you?"

He shook his head and glanced with a puzzled expression toward the old, dilapidated house that had always stood at the edge of his father's big corn field. It was uninhabited and partly obscured by wild cucumber vines.

"I only knew it was called the old Conyngham place," he said. "When mother was alive, she used to go over there and keep geraniums in boxes in the front windows, and our hired man—the one we had before—lived there with his wife for quite a long time."

"Well, your mother used to live there, Mauney," his aunt said, "She was looking after Uncle James.

You see his wife had died and he was old and sick with asthma." She glanced toward the opposite side of the road. "I suppose this bog-land here gave him the disease. He was all alone and when we got his letter, your mother made up her mind to come out and look after him. So she left Scotland when she was just seventeen. She remained right with him to the last, and certainly did not spare herself."

"My mother never told me that," Mauney interrupted.

"No. She wouldn't tell you. But while she was looking after Uncle James our own mother died in Carstairs and it was too far for her to come home. Then I married Neville and, poor girl, she felt that all her relatives were gone. So, after Uncle James died, she—she stayed here, you see."

"Married my father."

"Yes, Mauney," she said sadly. "Remember, dear boy, your mother was the sweetest girl that—"

She hesitated, as if her interest in the farm house and the orchard had suddenly usurped her attention.

"You've got quite a big farm, Mauney," she said. "Are you going to stay here and be a farmer, too?"

"I guess I'll have to, Aunt Mary," he smiled.

"I see."

"But I'd like to get some education, some time."

Her pretty, blue eyes wandered from his face to the figures of Neville Day and his sister who were just turning about to come back toward the car. For a moment her face became dreamy as if she were mentally exploring the pleasant future. Then she took a card from her purse and handed it to him.

"My address is on that, Mauney," she said. "Please write to me once in a while and let me know how you

are getting along. We go back to Scotland in another week. Dear me, you ought to be glad you live in America."

Soon her husband was beside the car.

"That land could all be reclaimed," he said, wagging his thumb toward the marsh. "It wouldn't cost over two thousand, either."

"Dollars?" asked Mrs. Day.

"No, pounds."

"They don't need to do that sort of thing," stated Miss Day. "As it is now, there's plenty of tillable soil not under cultivation. I fancy that it will be a long time before these farmers will find it necessary to reclaim land."

Day glanced at his watch.

"If you don't mind, Mary," he said, "it's getting late and we'd better try to make Lockwood before dark. How far is it, Mauney?"

"It's just over twenty miles."

They entered the car while Mauney stood on the road waiting to say good-bye. Neville Day tossed away the stump of his cigar and settled down behind the wheel, adjusting his motor-cap more comfortably.

"Oh!" he said, turning to hand up a large parcel, done up in wrapping paper. "You forgot the books."

Mrs. Day laughed.

"Mauney," she said, "I brought you three books, but I'm not going to give them to you. They are just wild Indian stories of adventure."

"Why did you buy that truck, my dear?" asked Day.

"Why, I really didn't figure it out, Neville," she laughed. "I imagined Mauney about fourteen. But I'll change them and send them down."

Mauney took the proffered hands of Day and his sister and then his Aunt Mary's. When his aunt was kissing him on the cheek, Neville Day was clearing his throat and chewing at the end of a new cigar. Soon the motor-car backed into the lane; then, with a sudden lurch ahead, it snorted up the road, his aunt waving her hand in farewell. Mauney watched it until it was engulfed in a dense cloud of dust and the noise of its opened exhaust had quieted to a faint rumble. Then he walked slowly up the lane toward the house.

By the kitchen door he encountered his father pumping himself a tin ladleful of well water.

"Who was them people?" he demanded.

"Some tourists."

"What'd they stop here for?"

"One of the women wanted to pick some blue weed by the side of the road."

"H'm! I wish to God she'd pick some of the blue weed out the grain field," he said. "Why did they turn around and go back?"

"They wanted to get to Lockwood before dark, I guess."

Later in the evening, Mauney sat on the kitchen verandah lost in thought. He leaned back in his tilted chair and rested his head on the window-sill. Presently he fell asleep. He was awakened by a sharp sensation on his chin.

"What's the matter?" he asked, opening his eyes to see the hired girl standing near him, smiling broadly.

"I just pulled one of them hairs out o' your chin, Maun," she laughed. "When are yuh goin' to start to shave 'em?"

CHAPTER IV

THE HARVEST MOON.

"A rustic roughness"—Horace, Ep. Book I.

THE story he had heard from his aunt, with its unexplained gaps, filled Mauney's mind for days. He wondered most about what she had not told him. Her seemingly instinctive fear—or was it scorn?—of meeting his father roused torturing curiosity. Probably his mother's letters had told her either plainly or in suggestive language of her great unhappiness.

The motor-car visit haunted him. It was so unnatural, as though, in a painful dream, he had beheld his own mother, whose features were to remain before him in waking hours. Spectre-like out of the unknown world she had come, to vanish immediately, leaving scant comfort, herself immune from his ardent desire to detain her.

The incident was characteristic of life, as he was learning to know it, for he gained cognizance of an enigmatical curse aimed at whatever promised happiness. One whom even a few moments had enshrined in his affections must tremble and disappear, as a delicate bird, hovering for an instant, is driven away by a sight or smell.

Every aspiration of his existence was leashed to his father's stolid nature. He traced the deterring thongs, one by one, back to the paternal influence. Some hidden

action or some unrevealed quality of his father's had driven his aunt away in a dust-cloud. And the dust which rose up to obscure her loved face was symbolic, for dust of a kind was slowly settling upon the freshness of his own nature.

One evening his reverie of unhappiness was broken by a familiar voice when, turning about, he beheld David McBratney trudging along with a large, grey, telescope valise. In answer to his question, McBratney replied that he was starting on foot for Lockwood, where next morning he would take the train for Merlton to begin his ministerial studies. He was walking because his father, suffering from ill-humor, had refused him a horse. But evidently, there was no martyrdom about the situation.

"He's an old man," Dave said, putting down his burden and wiping his forehead with a big, red handkerchief, "and I didn't like to start no row."

"Are you going for good?" Mauney asked, rising from the grass and walking slowly to the edge of the road.

"Sure. I sold my three-year-old yesterday for a hundred, and that'll keep me for a while up to Merlton. I guess Dad will come around after a while. But I reckon I'd just blow away, quiet like, without causin' too much commotion."

"You're a cheerful cuss, Dave," Mauney said.

"You bet," he laughed, as he turned to look back toward his home. "I tell yuh, Maun, when a fellah gets sort o' squared away with God Almighty, why, he can't be no other way. Some o' the neighbors says I'm makin' a big mistake to leave the farm. But that farm ain't nothin' to me now. Maybe I won't never have a

bit o' land to me name, but, I'm tellin' yuh, I've got somethin' as more'n makes up. Well, Maun, old boy," he said, picking up his valise and sticking out his big, sun-burned hand. "I'll be goin' along. Good-bye. Best of luck to yuh!"

For minutes Mauney stood thoughtfully watching his retreating figure as, swinging into a long stride, he covered the first lap of his long walk to Lockwood. His big figure grew smaller and smaller and the valise dwindled to a little grey speck, but he never turned to look back and soon he was lost in a bend of the road.

Although Mauney disliked in McBratney, what he considered half-familiar references to the Creator, he distinctly admired his courage and did not hesitate to express his admiration next day at supper when the subject came up. Evidently Bard had called at the McBratney's that afternoon on his way from Beulah.

"The old man's all broke up," he said. "Poor old chap. There he is right in the middle of the hayin' with nobody to help him, and Dave walks right out an' leaves him. He might 'a' stayed till the first o' August, anyway."

"I guess Dave's got it pretty bad, Dad," William remarked as he spread a large chunk of butter over his bread. "Anybody that'll start out an' walk to Lockwood on a hot night, carrying a big grip, why, there's somethin' wrong with his brains. I never figured Dave'd be such a damned fool!"

Mauney looked up sharply at his brother.

"He isn't a damned fool!" he said flushing. "I may not have any more use for religion than you have, Bill, but I admire any fellow who does what he thinks is right!"

"Is that so?" scoffed William, glaring across the table. "Well, now look here, freshie—"

Mauney, inflamed by the word, as well as by his brother's sneering manner, jumped to his feet, and became the centre of attention.

"I refuse to be called 'freshie' by you," he said with some effort at restraint, "and I have just enough sympathy with Dave McBratney that I'm not going to have you call him a damned fool, either!"

Bard pounded the table.

"Here, sit down, Maun," he commanded and then turned with a faint smile toward his elder son. "Bill, eat your victuals and be quiet. O' course," he added presently, "there ain't no doubt but what Dave is a damned fool, and he's goin' to wake up one o' these days and find it out, too. But now he's gone away I don't see what the old man's goin' to do. I advised him to sell out the farm and go up to Beulah an' take it easy. There ain't no good o' William Henry stayin' down here no longer. He'll have to get a hired man now, and with wages where they is he wouldn't clean up nothin'."

After a short silence, William chuckled softly as he raised his saucer of hot, clear tea to his lips.

"I was just thinkin' about the Orange Walk down to Lockwood last year," he explained. "There was Dave, with a few drinks in him, struttin' around the park, darin' everybody to a scrap. Gosh, it's funny to think o' him bein' a preacher. I mind that night—we didn't get home till seven o'clock the next mornin' an' I pitched in the harvest field all that day."

"Sure," nodded Bard. "I've done the same thing many a time when I was your age."

"And the next night," continued William proudly, "me and Dave was up to Ras Livermore's harvest dance. That hoe-down lasted till five in the mornin'. I can see Dave yet, sweatin' through the whole thing—never missed a dance."

"Wonder if Ras is goin' to put on a shin-dig this here harvest?" mused Bard.

"He ain't never missed puttin' one on since I can remember," said the hired girl, who had been listening intently.

"The other day," William remarked, "I saw Ras up in Abe Lavanagh's barber shop. I ast him if he was goin' to have a dance this year an' he hit me an awful clout on the back an' he says: 'Better'n' bigger'n ever, my boy. Come an' bring yer fleusie. They'll be plenty to eat, and Alec Dent is goin' to fiddle again.'"

"And I guess Dave won't hear the music, neither," said Bard.

* * * * *

About ten days after his aunt's visit Mauney received a letter from her, written in Merlton, and containing a crisp, five-dollar bill. "I really haven't had time to choose a gift for you," she wrote, "so please buy any little thing you fancy. Your Uncle Neville and I are leaving for New York to-night, and intend sailing the next day for Scotland. Neville is afraid England will be drawn into this terrible European mix-up, and of course, if that happens, he may have to leave his business as he holds a majority in the Scottish Borderers. I'm praying there won't be a war, but it certainly does look dark."

War! Mauney located the *Beulah Weekly* in the

wood-box and searched its columns in vain for any mention of European politics. He wished that his father had consented to have a rural telephone installed, so that he could telephone now to some of the neighbors and find out what was transpiring. Next day in Beulah he asked the postmaster through the wicket if there seemed to be any danger of a war.

"War!" the man repeated, staring stupidly through his high-refractive spectacles. "Whereabouts?"

"In Europe."

The postmaster reflectively poked his index finger into his mouth to free his molar teeth from remnants of his recent supper.

"I guess not," he said lazily. "I ain't heard nothin' about it."

"Do you know a good Merlton newspaper?" Mauney enquired.

"Oh, yes," he replied, his face at once brightening to a patronizing smile. "The *Merlton Globe* is the best. It is the newsiest paper printed in the country, unexcelled for its editorials, has the largest unsolicited circulation, is unequalled for its want ad. columns, and reflects daily the current thought and events of both hemispheres. Yuh'd certainly get what yer huntin' for in the *Merlton Globe*, Mr. Bard, 'cause if there's any war on anywhere—don't matter where—they'd most likely have it."

"What does it cost?" Mauney asked.

"Only five dollars per year," he replied politely, removing an eye-shade from his forehead, and staring anxiously at his customer. "Of course, I'm the local agent, you know," he added.

"Oh! are you?"

"Oh, yes—yes," he said, with a nervous little laugh, his hands together as if in the act of ablution.

For a moment Mauney hesitated, while his hand, deep in his pocket, felt the crisp treasury note with which he was so tempted to part. A number of considerations caused him to weigh well his present transaction, but he soon gave his initials to the eager postmaster and went home satisfied.

Seth Bard had, of course, always been able to find sufficient news in the *Beulah Weekly*. It is doubtful if he would have spent the annual dollar on it except for the long column advertising farm sales. He usually spent half an hour searching this portion of the paper, then a listless five minutes over the personal column, which, to his particular mind, provided an amusing satire, only to fall asleep, later, as he tried to read the fragmentary generalities that filled the stereotyped section. The hired girl religiously preserved the editions until she had found time to read the instalments of a continued love story. When the *Merlton Globe* began to arrive with the name of "Mr. Mauney Bard" upon it, a precedent seemed to have been established for introducing unwelcome new factors into the self-sufficient household.

"Where'd you get the money?" Bard demanded, in accordance with Mauney's expectations.

"Found it," he replied, just as he had planned to do.

There was no more questioning, although Mauney knew his father did not believe him. With queer pride, Bard scorned to read the big daily, although the woman found back numbers useful for lining pantry shelves.

"We don't worry none about what's goin' on over in Europe, Bill," remarked the father one evening while

Mauney sat nearby reading the paper. "If they want to put on a war over there, why, let 'em sail to it. 'Taint none o' our business."

"Guess we got 'bout enough to do, running this here farm, Dad," William agreed, "without wastin' any time with that kind o' truck."

* * * * *

The annual harvest dance at Ras Livermore's was a long-standing event of great local interest, for, since most people could remember, it had been as faithful in its appearance as the harvest itself. Men of fifty recalled gala nights spent there in their exuberant twenties. Livermore was benevolent and kindly, well over seventy, and had developed hospitality to a degree where he required it now as a social tonic. No invitations were sent out because rumour of the event invariably preceded the event itself, thus fixing the date, and, as to the personnel of the guests, Livermore's slogan of "Everybody come" was sufficient, for he knew that the ultra-religious of Beulah would never appear and that the best recommendation for the qualities of a guest was the very spontaneity that impelled him or her to be present.

For the past three years it had been one of the bright spots in Mauney's life and so, on the day of the dance, he brought downstairs his best suit of clothes for the hired girl to sponge and press. The men did not get in from the grain field until seven o'clock.

"Me and Annie'll manage the milkin' to-night," Bard generously announced, as they ate supper. "Snowball's goin' too. Soon's yuh get through eatin', Maun, go bed the horses, and, Bill, you an' Snowball pump the cows

some water an' draw the binder under the machine shed. Then hitch up old Charlie, jump into yer boiled shirts, and get up to Ras's."

"Ain't you goin', Dad?" William asked.

"No. I'm goin' over to see William Henry an' make him an offer on his farm. Annie'll have to stay here an' look after the house. I'm gettin' too old fer this here dancin' business anyway. I used to be able to stay with the best of 'em, Bill, but a plug o' chewing tobacco is about as much dissipation as I can stand now."

By nine o'clock Mauney, with his brother and Snowball, were driving up through Beulah and turning at the end of the village along the Stone Road. Three miles through the darkening landscape brought them nearer a cluster of pine trees behind which Livermore's large frame house could be seen with every window alight. Between the trees were suspended yellow Japanese lanterns in long, bellying rows, beneath which could be seen the moving white gowns of women and the dark forms of men standing in groups. Buggy-loads of people were constantly arriving and being directed by Livermore who, dressed in an old-fashioned cut-away suit, was strutting about as actively as a man of thirty. A congestion of buggies at the lane entrance required William to pull up the horse, and wait his turn.

"Hello, Ras!" came the shout of greeting from one of the buggies. "How's yer old heart?"

"She's still a-pumpin'!" he replied, causing a general outburst of laughter, since Livermore was noted for an individualistic strain of wit, and anything he might say was to be thus rewarded.

"Hello, is that you, Bill?" he called as they passed him. "I see yer girl is here before you. Drive right

in. 'There's more people here to-night than yuh'd see at yer own funeral. Hurry up, Bill, 'cause there's a mighty sight o' fine women-folks here, and not a Methodist foot among 'em."

Even a half-hour later, as Mauney strolled about the lawn chatting with acquaintances, load after load of laughing people continued to arrive, and he joined the crowd who were lined up watching Livermore greet his guests.

"Drive right into the yard, boys," he called. "If they hain't room under the cow-sheds, hitch 'em up to the wind-mill."

"Quite a turn-out, Ras," remarked Doctor Horne, as he suddenly reined his black horse into the lane.

"Hello, Doc! Well, well, well, if here ain't Doc Horne!" exclaimed Livermore, advancing to shake the physician's hand. "I tell yuh, doc, it's a pretty frisky lot o' people. You kin tie your horse to the fence, case you git a call an' have to leave early. One o' the boys'll show you."

"Is that scoundrel, Alec Dent, here to-night?" asked Horne in a mock-whisper, leaning over the side of his buggy.

"Yes, an' dancin' is goin' to start directly, Doc. Alec has just had a pint o' rye whiskey an' there ain't enough furniture left on the kitchen floor fer an Esquimo to start house-keepin' with."

"Whoop!" laughed Horne in a loud chuckle, as he touched his horse with the whip. "Erastus, you old reprobate, you old skunk!"

Women were busy preparing five long tables under the pine trees for the refreshments which would be served at midnight. Mauney was inveigled into carry-

ing benches by Myrtle McGee, one of the acknowledged belles of the countryside, who came up to him in her usual direct way, carrying a pile of plates, and smiling seductively.

"D'yuh want to work?" she enquired, with a much more intimate address than the occasion demanded.

"That's what I came up here to avoid," Mauney laughed as he looked down into her sharp, black eyes.

"But you'd help me, wouldn't you?" she pouted. "Go fetch some o' them benches, like a good boy."

After he had obeyed, and while the crowd of people were slowly moving back toward the kitchen, drawn by the lure of the violin music, she came up with him again, fanning her flushed face with her handkerchief. She was not more than twenty and wore a pleated, white silk gown that gave attractive exposure of her arms and bosom, smooth and firm like yellowed ivory, and contrasted markedly with her jet-black hair, decorated by a comb of brilliants.

"Well," she said, tilting her head sidewise, and according him an angled glance, "I s'pose you're goin' to give me yer first dance, ain't yuh, Maun?"

A subtle compliment was conveyed in this unconventional invitation, and Mauney, surprised at his own susceptibility, at once agreed. Together they strolled toward the kitchen verandah where already a crowd was assembled. The windows and doors of the kitchen were all removed, and Mauney, peering above the mass of eager heads, saw a broad strip of yellow floor, reflecting the light of several oil-lamps set in wall brackets. As yet no dancing had begun, but Alexander Dent, a corpulent man of sixty with a heavy, pasty face, was

perched on top of the kitchen stove, where, seated on a chair, his body swung to the rhythm of his bow.

"Jest gettin' warmed up!" he announced, with a sly glance from the corner of his black eyes toward the crowd at the doors.

This was the twenty-eighth annual harvest dance at which he had assumed responsibility for the music. In accordance with his ideal of never growing old he had undertaken, in late years, to dye his hair and moustache much blacker than they had ever been even in his youth. Only his chin, which receded weakly beneath his bushy moustache, gave any evidence of age, for his quick eyes, his animated movements, the tap-tap of his toe keeping time against the stove lid, suggested youth. He was to be accompanied by an organ set at the top of three steps leading to the dining room, at which Mrs. Livermore, second wife of the host, already presided in readiness. As Dent finished his first flourish and began tucking a large, white silk handkerchief under his chin Erastus Livermore appeared on the floor and initiated applause in which every one joined. In a moment the host raised his hand for order.

He was a big man, slightly bent at the shoulders, with a high, sloping forehead, a bald pate, a grey, tobacco-stained moustache and dim, grey eyes, full of quiet hospitality that sparkled brightly as he spoke.

"Folks," he said, by way of opening the function, "I dunno why I allus have to get out here an' say a few words. The woman told me I had to do it, so I guess that's reason enough."

A burst of laughter followed this remark.

"When I look around and see you folks all dressed up in yer Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes, makes me think of

how much the styles is changed since the first dance we put on here. In them days, the women folks all had big hoop skirts, that ud hardly go through that there door. But now we see a change. They believe more in advertisin' and showin' off their ankles."

"Ras—Ras!" came Mrs. Livermore's disapproving voice.

Again the guests laughed, this time more heartily.

"Well—ain't it true, folks?" he asked.

"Sure, Ras!"

"You bet."

Just then the rural telephone, which was attached to the kitchen wall, rang five short rings.

"That's our call," Livermore said to his wife. "Tell 'em to come a jumpin', we hain't even started yet."

When she had answered the telephone she whispered something to her husband.

"All right," he said. "I'm sorry to have to call our old friend, Doctor Horne. He's wanted at onct down the Graham road, at Bob Lombard's. I guess maybe the baby has swallowed a carpet tack."

"Thanks, Ras," came Horne's voice from outside. "Don't let me interrupt your speech!"

"Come back if you can, Doc!"

"I think by the way you and Alexander Dent are starting in, you may need me before you get through," replied Horne, already untying his horse from the fence nearby. When the laughter had again subsided, Livermore continued.

"An' there's only two o' that old brigade left here to-night," he said, "myself and Alec Dent."

The musician's name was greeted by a loud hand-

clapping to which he responded by rising from his chair and executing a deep salaam.

"Mind the lids, Alec," continued Livermore. "I bet Alec ain't forgot them hoop skirts."

"Why, no," affirmed the musician in a clear, bass voice, as he seated himself. "Them was the fantastic days, Rastus. It was right on this floor I met the woman that's been bossin' me around ever since. Them was *the* days!"

"Now, folks," said the host, "With these few openin' words, I'll call on our old friend to play a cotillion, an' I want everybody to light right in an' hoe 'er down till mornin'! Joe Hanson, the man on the right with the false teeth, is goin' to call off, a-standin' on the wood-box, an' I want to see the young folks get well het up. Ready, Alec?"

The butt of his bow was poised over the strings of his violin, his head nestled down to the instrument, his toe lifted preparatory to the opening note. He nodded.

"Then let her go!"

The thrilling call of the violin immediately drew four sets to occupy their places on the kitchen floor—tall, sun-burned youths with coats cast aside, smiling at their partners who quivered with eagerness to be started. Mauney and Miss McGee were unable to gain entrance, but collided with Amos Blancher, a husky fellow to whom she had evidently promised the first dance. He demanded an explanation.

"Why, Ame," she said, "you're too slow to catch a cold. Mauney an' I are goin' to have the first dance together, ain't we, Maun?"

Blancher scowled ill-temperedly at Mauney and backed away, muttering under his breath.

"It's goin' to be a corkin' good set, too," predicted Miss McGee, leaning against Mauney's arm as they watched the progress of the dance.

"Address your partner; corners the same," commanded Hanson from his position on the wood box.

Everyone bowed, and immediately scuffled their feet in rhythm with the music.

Another bow, in a different figure, and again the prancing of eager feet.

"Right and left through and inside couple swing. Right and left back and the same old thing!"

Hanson entered into the spirit so thoroughly that his voice took on a barbarous rhythm, but he enunciated his directions very clearly considering the fact that his upper plate habitually fell away from the roof of his mouth on open syllables.

"Ladies turn out, with the bull in the ring; gents come out and give birdie a swing!"

The process of giving "birdie" a swing included a vigorous masculine lurch which brought the lady from the floor with much sailing of her skirts and exposure of her muscular, black-stockinged calves.

"Lady round lady and gents go slow; lady round gent and gents don't go."

Thus continued the strenuous dance, while the faces of the dancers began to flush with the warmth of their exercise, and the fiddler proceeded exuberantly and with growing animation from one movement to the next. When the first set was finished, another, made up of different dancers, commenced, leaving only time for Alexander Dent to reach for a proffered glass of spirits. By an unwritten law it was understood that whiskey was reserved only for the fiddler as an indulgent acknow-

ledgment of his services, but the stealthy movement of the occasional youth to the back box of his buggy in the yard was forgiven if he exercised moderation.

Those not engaged in dancing played euchre in the dining room or sat on long benches on the verandah telling stories, exchanging gossip or discussing crops. By midnight, Mauney, weary of the music, and weary, too, of the monotonous jargon of his associates, stole a few moments by himself on the end of the front verandah farthest from the rest.

The great orb of the red, harvest moon was rising like a ball of molten, quivering fire from the deep purple scarf of smoky air that lay upon the horizon, while a warm breeze moved from the stubble field nearby. His thoughts drifted fancifully, trying to free themselves from the weird thralldom of the dance, imagining the moon the secret source of heat that supplied the dancers with energy, and the warm breeze an emanation from their impassioned enthusiasm. Past him, as he sat secluded behind a vine of Virginia creeper, a youth and a maiden, unsuspecting his presence, walked quietly side by side until they stood by the cedar edge at the border of the grove. He watched the moonlight reflected from the maiden's face as she glanced quickly toward the house, and from her arms as they encircled her lover's neck. The lover bent toward her and pressed his lips passionately upon her mouth. Then they returned, with a new rhythm in their gait, to join the crowd who sat at the other side of the house.

Mauney breathed with mild difficulty as if stifled by the glamor of the sultry night. Then in a mood of inexplicable detachment he wandered again through the groups of people, half unconscious of their presence.

He stood watching the dancers once more and listening to the endless grind of the fiddle. A round dance was in progress and his eyes followed the two lovers now clasped in the dreamy movement of a waltz. He could not understand why the picture blurred as he watched it. He was thinking of the beauty of love—the tragedy of love—this closed, complete, unopening circle of passion that drifted to the beat of the music heedless of the universe. His eyes wandered from their graceful forms to dwell upon the yellow glow of the Japanese lanterns.

A stronger breeze came from the fields and moved the big lanterns till one of them caught fire and burned, attracting the attention of a score of people.

Then there were five, sudden, sharp rings!

The music ceased. The dancers paused. Livermore entered from the verandah, and going to the telephone put the receiver to his ear. Casual curiosity prompted a general quietness among the guests.

"Hello! Yes, this is Ras, speakin'. Who's that? Hello, Frank, why ain't you up to the dance? What?"

Turning about, Livermore waved to the guests. "Be quiet jest a minute. It's kind o' hard to hear him."

For a moment he listened, while the changing expression on his face provoked greater curiosity and greater quietness.

"Ain't that a caution?" he exclaimed, hanging up the receiver. "If England hain't gone and declared war on Germany."

"What's that?" asked a voice on the verandah.

"War—the British is gone to war," Livermore answered. "Frank Davidson just got back from Lockwood, an' says the news just reached Lockwood afore he left."

"War, eh?"

"Yep! So Frank says. Maybe it's just talk."

"Well, I guess it ain't goin' to do us no harm, Ras, anyhow," said Alec Dent, waving with his fiddle-stick. "Get off the floor an' give 'em a chance, Ras."

Again the slow, measured music of the waltz floated out on the night air, and Mauney watched the lovers continue in their embrace.

His heart pounded with excitement. Vague sympathies, eager yearnings, and impatient impulses moved by turns in his breast. That which the newspapers had suspected had become fact. How could these people continue to dance in the face of such catastrophic news? He could not dance. He could only think and think, and wonder why, in the unexplorable depths of his heart, he was glad that war was come.

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO LOCKWOOD.

"A military gent I see"—Thackeray, "The New-comer."

FOUR weeks of the European fury had become history, but as yet the district around Beulah preserved its accustomed indifference to outside influences. In staid self-sufficiency farmers garnered their harvest, for, if the war ever entered their heads, it was soon dismissed as a far-away happening which could never have relation to themselves. Great Britain had conducted campaigns before, when, as now, a veteran here or there might heed the alarm and be off to his favorite sport, but it was never dreamed that the inviolate aloofness of Lantern Marsh, for instance, could ever be affected.

Farm lands continued, as usual, to be bought and sold. Bard, after much careful barter, procured the valuable estate of William Henry McBratney for a sum which he might have been ashamed to confess, save for personal vanity over his own close bargaining. The purchase, however, ended in a disappointment, for, on offering it to his elder son as a proposed wedding endowment, he discovered that William was averse to marrying, and the newly acquired property had therefore to lie idle. Hired help was not to be had, since already the excitement of war was drawing floaters to the cities and Bard had to content himself with the thought that

the war would soon be ended and that William might by then have discovered a woman whom he would be willing to marry.

Mauney found in the war the first successful antidote to his long existing boredom, for, except when he was working, he was reading the *Merlton Globe* and following events with keenest interest. One day at noon, a large, green motor-car drove suddenly up the lane, and two uniformed officers enquired of Bard if he had any horses to sell. It was to be an army purchase, and Bard, after sending them away empty, bethought himself seriously, with an air of brewing plans.

"Bill," he said, "if this here war goes on, I'd like to own a few horses. But then," he added, "'tain't goin' to last!"

Meanwhile, Mauney had heard that men were enlisting in Lockwood. Like a flash, he imagined the possibilities of offering himself as a recruit. It was the first time that he had connected the war in any way with himself, and it was mostly his long-cherished craving to leave home that made him do so. The first real breath of the actual war entered the Bard household one evening at supper when Mauney said to his father:

"Dad, I'd love to go to war!"

Bard was rendered speechless; William smiled sarcastically at his father, and then all, including hired help, stopped eating and stared at Mauney.

"You!" gasped Bard. "Well, what put that in your head?"

William laughed quietly.

"I guess they'd never take him, Dad," he said.

"What do you know about soldierin'?" Bard demanded. "Why, you'd be a nice-lookin' outfit. Now

look here," he said in a tone of ominous finality; "you can just get that idea out o' your head, right away, understand me. You ain't goin' to no war, and the sooner you realize it the better for you."

That night, however, Mauney did not sleep. The germ of unrest had been inoculated into his blood. His glimpse of a solution for his troubles had turned his mind so irrevocably toward the new purpose that he did not even undress, but lay wakeful and undecided. He knew his father's present attitude well enough, but he did not know what his attitude would be in case he were defied.

When the first breezes of morning moved the cotton curtains of his window, showing grey in the dawning light, Mauney got up and sat by the window, gazing at the indistinct outlines of trees, listening to the stirring birds and the distant call of a rooster. He felt that he was listening to these particular sounds for the last time. As it grew lighter he tip-toed to the attic for an old leather valise, brought it to his room, and packed up his few belongings. Then, when he heard movement in the kitchen, he went down. The woman, busy at the stove, turned and looked at his valise.

"Where are you goin', Maun?" she asked, a little dubiously.

"To Lockwood."

"What for?" she continued, searching his face.

"To enlist."

She made no reply, but applied herself quietly to her task of preparing breakfast. When Bard came in he saw Mauney sitting on the step that led to the dining-room with his valise on the floor beside him.

"What are you doin' with your Sunday clothes on?"

he asked, while his narrow eyes fell to notice the valise.

"Where are yuh goin'?"

"Lockwood."

"What for?"

"To enlist."

Bard stamped across the floor to the wash basin and began vigorously washing his hands. Only the unnecessary splashing of water and the rattling of the basin expressed his mental condition. When he finished he walked to his place at the table and sat down.

"Annie," he said very softly, "give me them eggs."

The woman obeyed with great punctiliousness as if dreading the storm of language soon to escape the paternal lips. Bard ate in silence, never once looking up. Then, pushing his plate from him, he loaded his pipe, lit it, and for the first time glanced at Mauney.

"When are you goin'?" he asked, as casually as if it were to Beulah for the evening mail.

"This morning," said Mauney.

"How are you going to get there?" Bard continued, in ominous calmness.

"I thought perhaps Snowball would drive me down," said Mauney, uncertain at what instant to expect a volcano of abuse.

For a moment or two Bard stood thoughtfully by the window, evidently weighing the situation.

"Well, Maun, I tell yuh," he said at length. "There ain't no chanct in the world of 'em takin' a kid like you. But I guess maybe the best way to cure you is to let you go down and get it over with. When you get down there and see the hull outfit lined up you'll change yer mind, anyhow. Tell yuh what I'll do. I'll let Snowball and you off fer the day. Snowball's gettin' kind

o' stale on the job, too, and maybe a drive to Lockwood would sort o' brace him up. But, mind, I don't want to hear no more damned nonsense after you get home, understand me."

At noon that day old Charlie, covered with lather from the twenty-mile journey, drew Mauney and the hired man into the town of Lockwood. Mauney sat leaning back, absent-mindedly watching the road, while Snowball held the reins and occasionally touched the horse's flanks with the whip.

A great weight had fallen from Mauney's shoulders the moment they had passed out of his father's farm-yard and, during the drive in the sultry morning air, his imagination had moved quickly. He felt the great doors of the world opening to receive him. He felt that he was proceeding now into the mystery of real life long denied him. The war was truly a secondary consideration. He knew nothing about the practical side of campaigning. Dimly, though, he fancied that once he reached the Lockwood armouries, some one there would take him admiringly by the hand with expressions of welcome and commendation for his noble decision.

When they had passed along King Street they came to the wide green upon whose upper portion reposed the grey stone armouries with its mullioned windows, its turrets, its scalloped parapets, and its tall flag-pole bearing a huge flag that floated lazily in the breeze. A dozen men in ordinary clothes stood in several groups near the huge doorway, while an occasional soldier in uniform walked stiffly across the lawn to disappear beneath the arch. After noting that his suitcase was

safely bestowed in the bottom of the buggy, Mauney got out and adjusted his tie and soft hat.

"Snowball," he said, "you stay here till I come back. I'm going to see if this is where to enlist."

"I guess I'll g-go in with you, Maun!" stammered the hired man as he got out and began tying the horse to a pavement ring. "I hain't never worried much about soldierin', but may's well see the doin's now as I'm here. Wait a minute, Maun."

Together they walked across the green and soon came up with a group of civilians who were talking about the war. One of them was a veteran of several campaigns, for he wore a line of medals pinned to his vest and kept his coat well pulled back to display them. He pointed Mauney to the doorway.

As they were about to enter, an erect individual, neatly uniformed, with waxed moustache and a short, black stick held under one of his straight arms, advanced to meet them.

"What do you want?" he demanded, crisply.

"I want to enlist," Mauney explained.

"Recruits?" he snapped haughtily, and pointed with his finger. "To the right, fall in line behind the others and wait your turn."

Mauney thanked him and turned to the hired man.

"You better wait for me outside, Snowball!" he said.

The crisp individual in uniform glanced quickly at Snowball, his eyes keenly studying him.

"You may wait here," he said, "if you choose."

The interior of the armouries was so dark that until Mauney's eyes became accustomed to the dimness, he paused, unable to see the queue of civilians who were standing in line in front of a frosted-glass door. He

then made his way over the flag-stones and took up his position in the rear. From a skylight in the high roof a beam of light fell through the dusty air of the big room and, striking in a huge square pattern on the centre of the floor, revealed two teams of horses dragging a field-gun down the middle of the drill-space. The rattle and din, increased by the shouted commands of some visible officers, were so deafening that Mauney did not notice the frosted-glass door open to receive six of his companions. He moved up and patiently waited his turn. At last his time came and he entered with five of his fellow recruits.

In the meantime Snowball sat on the edge of a green box at the entrance, smoking his pipe. The sergeant who had so leniently granted him permission to remain was at a short distance, tête-a-tête with a second sergeant who wore a dangle of white, red and green ribbons from the peak of his cap. The first sergeant pointed toward Snowball, made a gesture with his hands, at which the other nodded, and advanced toward the unsuspecting servant.

"Hello, my man," said the sergeant, slapping Snowball genially on the back. "How old are you?"

"Forty-five or six," he replied, looking up curiously.

"Stand up, won't you?"

Snowball obeyed, rather dubiously.

"My word!" remarked the sergeant, feigning to be overcome with admiring surprise. "You're a splendid specimen. Where did you get that chest?"

"I g-guess hard work done that," he said, commencing to giggle.

"You're just the kind of a man we're looking for,

sir," said the sergeant, placing one hand on Snowball's bosom and the other on his back. "Take a long breath."

He inspired deeply, casting a sharp, doubtful glance at the sergeant.

"I say, but you're well put together, sir," remarked the latter. "You'd make a fine soldier, I reckon."

For an instant Snowball's tilted face turned hesitatingly toward his flatterer. Then he began once more to laugh.

"You can't fool me, so you can't," he said, sitting down and avoiding the sergeant's eyes.

"But I'm not trying to fool you, sir," he averred. "You'd be an A1 man, I swear."

Snowball shuffled his feet, and drew vigorously on his pipe.

"They wouldn't take me, so they wouldn't," he said seriously with a jerk of his head toward the doorway.

"Well," said the sergeant, "would you go, if they found you fit?"

"Hain't no use t-talking about it," Snowball responded in a melancholy tone. "So they hain't!"

"Try them, sir, try them—won't you?"

"Come with me, sir," he added, taking Snowball's arm, when much to his surprise, the latter rose and accompanied him.

Mauney passed his physical examination and was led into a second room. He noticed that none of the others had been taken there. Behind a desk sat a young, clear-faced man with bone-rimmed spectacles, engaged in looking through a pile of documents.

"Doctor Poynton," said the sergeant, who brought him in, "would you report on this recruit's vision. The M.O. just sent him in."

"All right," nodded the doctor, as the sergeant went out.

For fully five minutes Mauney stood motionless, waiting for the eye-examination to commence, while the doctor continued reading the documents before him and idly smoking a cigar. When his impatience had nearly gotten the better of him and he felt tempted to remind the medical man of his presence, the latter turned in his chair and placed a stool on the floor a few feet from his desk.

"Sit down there!" he said in a distant tone, without looking at Mauney, who obeyed and awaited further instructions.

Doctor Poynton threw away the butt of his cigar and, opening a drawer, selected another from a box. This he lighted and blew out the match, meanwhile continuing uninterruptedly in his reading of the documents.

Mauney greatly elated at the success of his physical examination, found his present occupation of waiting greatly to his dislike. Why should they examine his eyes? He had never had any trouble with them. He controlled his impatience, however, as best he could, until, after many minutes, the doctor looked up.

"Now, then," he said. "Look at that card on the wall over yonder. Can you see the letters?"

"Yes."

"Very well, read them. First letter?"

"E."

"Next line!"

Mauney read four lines and paused.

"You can't read the fifth line?"

"I'm afraid not."

From a drawer, the doctor produced a testing frame,

perched it on Mauney's nose, and slipped two lenses before his eyes.

"Can you read it now?" he asked.

"No, it's worse than ever."

He removed the lenses and put in two others.

"Now."

Mauney read it accurately.

"All right," said Poynton, removing the frame, and scribbling some hieroglyphics on a slip of paper. "That's all I want. Take this chit in to Captain Blackburn."

"Where's he?"

"He's the officer who examined you."

"Thank you," said Mauney, returning to the room from which he had come. There were still half a dozen recruits stripped, undergoing examination. He waited until Captain Blackburn should be disengaged.

"Ever had rheumatism?" Blackburn was asking one of the candidates, while he percussed his chest.

"No," said a voice which seemed very familiar to Mauney.

"Cough! All right! Now turn around."

As the recruit turned, Mauney was astonished to behold the sun-burned face of Snowball. He would have exclaimed aloud, but already he felt the humility of a private soldier restraining him in an officer's presence.

Blackburn, after applying the bell of his stethoscope to various areas on Snowball's back, snapped the instrument from his ears.

"That's all—go along—pass him fit, sergeant! Next!"

Snowball scrambled into his clothes and walked quickly towards Mauney.

"For heaven's sake, Snowball, did you enlist?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Shake on it."

Mauney grasped the hired man's hand and gave it a powerful shaking. "You're a brick, Snowball. Just wait outside for me, I got through too, but there's some red-tape about my eyes."

When the recruits were all examined and were dressing, Capt. Blackburn pointed at Mauney.

"Get your eyes tested, boy?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Bring me the report."

Sticking on a pair of spectacles Blackburn glanced over the slip of paper.

"Too bad," he said. "You're unfit. Sergeant, mark off M. Bard as unfit for service."

"But I'm all right," expostulated Mauney.

"No you're not, boy."

"Yes, I am."

Blackburn stiffened up.

"Do you realize to whom you're talking?" he snapped.

A sergeant walked quickly forward and tapped Mauney's knuckles with his stick.

"Hands down at your side!" he barked. "You're speaking to an officer. Address him as 'sir!'"

Blackburn tossed the eye-report on the top of his desk, leisurely removed his spectacles, and then calmly nodded at the sergeant who was standing stiffly nearby.

"That's all, sergeant!" he said, indifferently, with a slight nod toward Mauney.

"Very good, sir," bawled the sergeant, clicking his

metal-plated heels together and saluting. Then, seizing Mauney by the arm, he led him toward the door.

"You can't join—may as well go home," he said, opening the door.

"But I never had any trouble with my eyes," Mauney argued, as the sergeant shoved him out into the big room of the Armouries.

"Don't matter. You're unfit!"

Bang! The door closed in his face.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IRON WILL.

"Good is a man's death which destroys the evils of life."—Publilius Syrus.

BARD delayed two years before he began horse-breeding in earnest. By that time the war had become a fixture, with more promise of an endless continuance than an early peace, and as it was impossible to hire help for farm work, he grew weary of carrying on his arduous agricultural labor with only his two sons to assist him. Consequently he determined to put less soil under seed and to confine his attentions to horses, since the army would afford an apparently inexhaustible market for their purchase. The news of his new determination was received with gladness by William, who had begun to tire of his strenuous labors, and with indifference by Mauney, who, since his rejection at Lockwood, had remained at home, mechanically submitting to his fate, and caring little what turn events might take.

A month previously the casualty lists had contained the name of Snowball, who had been killed in action in France.

"Don't seem natural," Bard had admitted simply, "Poor old Snowball. If he hadn't been such a fool he'd be right here to-day, same as the rest of us."

But Mauney questioned whether the fate of their former servant was not indeed preferable to his own.

In quiet moments—too quiet and too numerous for his liking—he secretly envied Snowball, for it seemed that a few months of death-rewarded struggle in France were infinitely easier than the drab years of Lantern Marsh promising no release. Long since he had forgotten his reception on returning from Lockwood—the jeers, the confident “I told you so” of his father, the stern promise of sterner treatment if he repeated the nonsense. The cause of his rejection by the army seemed unbelievably trivial, but on later consulting a civil oculist in Lockwood some kind of eye-trouble was discovered, with the result that Mauney adopted glasses. Even with this correction he was advised that he would not be able to qualify for general service abroad, and the prospect of entering home service in some dismal camp dissuaded him from further efforts to be accepted. By this time a few of the younger set in Beulah had enlisted, thereby establishing among their relatives a local cult of patriots who were never backward in snobbishly cutting others who had not gone. William was too thick-skinned to feel this, while Mauney was proud enough never to explain his very sufficient reason for remaining at home.

Then came rumors of conscription, the first feature of the war that promised to affect the Bard household. Bard himself was furious for he saw plainly that his elder son fell into the first group of unmarried men who would be called up. Mauney took a silent delight in the discomfiture of both. As the date approached for the new law to go into force he kept picturing the cataclysm of feelings that would be aroused, the unwilling departure of his husky brother and his father’s unavailing expostulation. It was the latter which really delighted Mauney, since he had come to regard his

father's will as the one stupendously efficient thing in life, never to be crossed or defeated. A great eagerness possessed him to see the law in force and to behold, just for once, with his own eyes, the spectacle of his father's spiritual collapse. The time approached with much rebellious comment from within his own home and that of other farmers who had until now had few reminders of war except higher prices for all their products. At last the evening arrived, the last evening of freedom for all potential conscripts, and Mauney sat in the kitchen with his father, awaiting the return of his brother who had gone to Beulah apparently to make a closer survey of the impending situation. At a late hour, William returned.

"Well?" said Bard, eagerly rising as his son entered the kitchen, "What about it?"

"It's all right," William replied with a sly smile. "They won't get me, Dad."

He had married Evelyn Boyce.

Mauney's astonishment was only less than his instinctive hatred of an action so basely material and selfish. When he learned the facts of William's evening sojourn in the village he flushed and regarded his brother with eyes that the brother could read only too plainly.

"What's the matter?" William blurted.

"With whom?" Mauney asked.

"You."

"I'm feeling sorry."

"What for?"

"For Evelyn Boyce, of course."

William's face colored quickly and the big veins of his neck stood out. He stood, stiffening his arms, then with a savage glare, he shook his fist at his brother.

"You better keep your mouth shut," he fumed, "or I'll shut it for you. What I do is my business, not yours."

In this principle William had the full paternal support and Mauney once more witnessed the complete success of his father's will. The plans had been made out carefully, beforehand. It was not many days until the bride was established with her husband on the McBratney farm and only three were left at the old homestead. Mrs. William Bard was a brainless, pretty girl of small physique, with a novel love of chickens, and of a screeching gramophone whose music could be heard each evening, when the wind was in the east. Occasionally she accompanied her husband on short evening visits to her father-in-law's, and quite won Bard's affections by sitting on his knee and lighting matches for him on the sole of her shoe. Toward her brother-in-law she adopted a surprising attitude of coquetry, that displeased her husband, and caused Mauney a degree of nausea. It was soon evident that she was not born to be the wife of William Bard. Beneath her empty hilarity there was to be gradually discerned a growing girlish discontent with things. Her attentions to her father-in-law grew less spontaneous and her flirting manner with Mauney came to have suggestions of pathetic appeal. Mauney felt that he could read beneath the surface the awakening to consciousness of one, who, having been bought for a purpose, would insist on demanding her price, for, vapid though her mind was, she possessed a sharp sense of justice in matters affecting herself. In the following summer William purchased a motor-car under pressure, and began taking his wife for evening drives, much to the elder Bard's outspoken disapproval.

"There's too much gadding about, Bill," he said one day as they talked matters over. "You've got to cut out this here flyin' all over the country."

"What am I goin' to do?" demanded William, impatiently. "You know I didn't want to marry her, but you advised me to. So now, you can put up with what I got, see!"

Life offered no solution for Mauney's inner troubles. If there had been one cheerful event to annul the interminable gloom of these years of war, or one friend to brighten the unlifting fogs that settled down upon him like the vapors of Lantern Marsh itself, he might have borne his discontent with greater patience. But the raw wound in his nature, made by no sudden sword-gash, but worn there by the attrition of dreary seasons, grew more unbearable. Every hope that had dared to rise had been forced down as by a vigilant, hateful fate. Every finer instinct had met its counterpart of external opposition. Every aspiration that trembled gently upward had been tramped by heavy feet, as violets in the path of horses. He had lived with his newspaper. He had watched the verdure of the springtimes fade beneath the dry suns of autumn, the green apples of his orchard redden and fall to earth, the birds of the swamp wing away to their southern homes, when ice bound the Lantern Marsh in its grip and biting winds hurled the snow in deep banks about the home. And as unchanging as the seasons he had watched his father's character deepen to its fixed qualities of greed and selfishness.

But an end was in sight.

Through the hot summer of endless labor in the fields, and of endless mind gropings, came vague breezes that touched his cheeks with promise of liberty. They

breathed a new hope that he scarcely dared to heed, for these mysterious breezes, as if they were the breath of fearless gentle angels, brought indistinguishable whisperings, to which he more and more bent his ear. Pausing in the field to lean momentarily on the handle of his hay-fork his eye turned quickly as if to catch an elusive presence that he felt nearby. But there was no one. He was quite alone save for his father and the others casting up great cocks of hay upon the wagon. But as he sat of an evening on the front steps of the farmhouse this haunting presence would come again, eluding his gaze that sought it among the orchard trees, heavy with their apple harvest. In his room at night he felt it directly behind him, and came to realize at length that it was the man he wanted to be, the prefigurement of a new Mauney Bard.

And the wisps of angel breath, with their sybilline intonations, began to be articulate, telling of a world of promise for the valiant, of knowledge, of friends, of hope.

He had waited for life to help him, but it offered no help. With spirits partially crushed by the mundane atmosphere and the endlessly sordid philosophy of his detested home he had waited in dejection. But, in the summer of 1916, recognizing at length that no power existed to help him but himself, he openly rebelled. One day he went to his father after dinner, as the latter smoked idly in the kitchen, chatting with the hired woman. Mauney was finally beside himself.

"Look here," he said without introduction, "I'm just about through with you and Lantern Marsh. Here I've been cooped up for years, just simply staying because there was nothing else to do. I want an education and,

by heavens, I'm going to have it. I think you ought to give me enough to go to college. But if you won't, I'm going anyway."

The woman, recognizing the private nature of their conversation, left them alone in the room.

The weight of Mauney's ultimatum lay as heavily on Bard's face as the noon sun on the yard outside the window. For minutes he sat with his head between his large, knotty hands, staring blankly at the table oil-cloth. Mauney felt a flickering pity for him, presented thus with a flat proposition from which no selfish escape seemed possible. Bard did not speak, nor did his face betray his thoughts. It was the tired face of a man weary with his efforts to coerce life, confronted at last with a problem that lay beyond his personal power.

"Well," he said, looking up at length like one, who, though unable to command, still hopes to barter. "If you'll stay on here I'll will you the farm and give you a quarter interest in the business now."

"Dad, you don't understand," said Mauney, "I want education. I'm sick of farming and don't intend to stay with it. I want to go to College and, as I told you, I'm going, anyway—"

"All right," said Bard simply and nodded his head many times. "You may regret this, boy, I think you will. Your first duty is to me. And I—"

The sound of horses' steps distracted his attention and, turning toward the window, he recognized a well-known stallion being led by a man in a sulky.

"There's Thompson, now," he said. "I have to go to the barn. But that's all I've got to say, Maun." He paused to strike the table with his fist. "Stay with me and I'll share up. But if you want to pull out, you do

it on your own hook. Not a cent from me, sir—not a cent!”

He walked toward the door, but turned to cast a glance at Mauney's serious face.

“You better think it over,” he said. “It's a purty big step, sir—a purty big step, I tell yuh.”

As he left to direct Thompson and the stallion to the barn, Mauney buried his face in his arms.

There could be no turning back on his resolve. His father's offer was no inducement. Life at Lantern Marsh had taken all these years to reach its logical termination—he must go. To himself he owed something and the debt disturbed him. Beyond the confines of the present he dreamed of self development and a great happiness. He did not know how long he had sat at the table, thrilled by his new determination, but it must have been many minutes. He was suddenly disturbed by the sound of hurrying feet and by the woman's voice, as she dashed into the kitchen.

“Maun!” she cried excitedly. “Get into Thompson's gig and go get the doctor. Your father's hurt!”

“What happened him?” asked Mauney, rising.

“Don't know. He was in with the horses. Hurry Maun, fer God's sake, I'm afraid he's killed by the way Thompson ran out.”

Mauney ran across the yard to untie Thompson's horse, but could see no evidence of tragedy. The sun lay heavily upon the manure pile and no sound disturbed the blue shadows of the stable windows. As he jumped into the sulky and, reaching for the whip, drove quickly down the lane, he saw the woman running toward the barn with a pail of water. His mind was a blank during that race to Beulah. He forgot everything that had

turned in his brain a few moments before. He only felt that something horrible had happened. He caught mental images of his father's face, rendered grotesque and abominable, but he put the pictures from him, and glanced for relief at the placid meadows along which he was flying at top speed. It seemed that he would never complete his journey when, all at once, he pulled up the lathered horse by Dr. Horne's lamp post.

He jumped out and had run only half-way to the office door when he beheld the burly physician, bare-headed, carrying his satchel.

"What's the matter, young fellow?" he asked.

"My father's kjked by a horse," Mauney quickly explained, "and I guess it's bad."

"Where is he?"

"Down in our barn."

Horne pointed to the office.

"Go in there, young fellow," he said. "On the back of the back door is the key to my barn. Hitch up my horse and follow me. I'll drive this race horse of Thompson's. Take your time, young fellow," he added, as Mauney ran toward the office. "You aren't the doctor. Just drive down slow, mind."

Later when Mauney had nervously succeeded in hitching up Doctor Horne's horse and was driving quickly homeward he wondered why he had been asked to drive so slowly. The horse seemed in good condition and in the habit of running, so he made no effort to stop him. Suddenly, though, at the outskirts of the town, as they passed the last houses, the horse slowed down to an easy trot, a matter of habit, too, as Mauney humorously reflected. At length, he reached home, but saw nobody

in the yard. Thompson's horse was wandering slowly by the end of the drive shed, nibbling the short grass. Maaney got out and tied the doctor's horse to the iron weight which he had taken from the buggy. For a moment he gazed toward the barn. There was the open stable door, the empty windows, the enlarging blue shadow of the building creeping toward the end of the manure heap, but no movement, save that of a white hen, picking in the straw that littered the ground. He slowly turned and entered the kitchen where, stretched upon the sofa, he discovered the woman, sobbing hysterically.

"How is he?" Maaney asked.

"I don't know. I don't know," she managed to say, turning over on her face and biting her finger. "I went over to get Bill, but he's in the back field. I guess you better get him, Maun. I—I can't walk no further!"

On his way to the lane Maaney saw the doctor, in his shirt sleeves, coming across the barnyard toward the kitchen. He waited for him, reflecting that he had never seen the physician walk so slowly.

"Well, Maaney," he said seriously, as he came up. "God knows this isn't the kind of thing I like to do. I feel damned sorry for you."

"Is he—is he dead, doctor?"

Horne slowly nodded his big, black head, while tears filled his big, black eyes.

"Yes, sir, poor Seth Bard," he said with a sigh. "He was a good farmer, was Seth. He never knew what hit him. Well, that's the way it goes."

BOOK II.
REBELS

CHAPTER I.

MAUNEY REACHES MERLTON.

"The house is a fine house when good folks are within."—George Herbert's *Collection*, 1639.

MAUNEY was seated in the green-upholstered seat of a railway car, with a ticket in his pocket marked Merlton. His baggage, consisting of a new trunk and two new leather suit-cases, was safely on board, or so he found himself anxiously hoping from time to time, as the train quickened its speed. He wore a new grey serge suit, purchased in Lockwood, the town from whose outskirts he was now passing, a suit that clung neatly to his big shoulders with a strange, new feeling of smartness. On his head reposed an attractive grey, soft hat with a black band, itself as new as the rest—as new as all the weird experiences of the present day which had kept him busy and curious. He was dazed by the rapid events, as if he had not become implicated voluntarily, but was being led by a magic power.

He was going to Merlton. That was the only fact of which he was momentarily certain, except that his brother William had motored him to Lockwood the previous night, and that he had sat beside Evelyn in the back seat, trying to steal time to think of a multitude of different matters that naturally flooded his mind. But he found it quite impossible and gave over eventu-

ally to her sentimental jabber concerning the marvellous character of his newly-contemplated life in Merlton, how much she herself would love to be coming, and how tedious life would be at Lantern Marsh without him. "Tedious," scarcely described it, for, since the death of his father, especially during the unpleasant process of settling the estate, in which process William had proved to be a very difficult person, he had realized a great tragedy in the atmosphere of the place. It depended not only on memories of his father's end, but equally also upon William's implanted selfishness. There had been scenes in the lawyer's office between the brothers, and William's contentiousness had created a hateful situation from which Mauney had glided easily along peaceful exits of least resistance. As a result the brother retained the original farm besides money, and Mauney took for his share twelve thousand dollars, with half the proceeds from the sale of the McBratney farm sometime in sight.

It had all been too drastically tragic to be tedious. Nothing quite so upsetting and revolutionary had ever occurred as the sudden death of his father. It had altered everything, like the stroke of a magician's wand. Here he was, for example, dressed as well as any man on the train, departing, probably forever, from scenes which until recently had been prison-like. Here he was, with more nerve than sense—or so he felt—launching without advice from anybody, straight at the metropolis, drawn thither like a shad-fly to an arc-light. Here he was with money enough and more for an education, but without the faintest idea of how to go about it. Above all, here he was, the loneliest chap imaginable, without one friend to talk to, and nothing ahead but a bleak

horizon of uncertain years and an absolutely unfamiliar world.

He almost longed, by a natural reversion of feeling, for the old times at home, for his father cursing him roundly, for William's sneers, for poor old Snowball's silent laughter, doubly silent now, and for the hired woman's rough sympathy.

During these cogitations he frequently interrupted himself to finger his vest pocket and be assured that he had lost neither the ticket marked *Merlton* nor the baggage checks. The casual observer, knowing nothing of Mauney's previous existence, would have received an impression of a young, well-to-do man, of kindly disposition, of keen sensibilities, and of, perhaps, unusual powers of mind. He might have passed for a young commercial traveller, save that his eyes possessed a glamor of imagination too vivid to have long withstood the prosaic details of business, and yet, on the other hand, though his bright face, nearly smiling, might have been that of an artist, there was about him a certain air of staid reserve that negated the impression.

But these golden opinions about the young man in the grey suit, were, to be sure, purely from without, since there existed within Mauney a much poorer estimate. He would have said that of all the people on this train he was unquestionably the most ignorant, the most awkward, the most lamentably inexperienced. He was going forth into the enigmatical universe unsupported, but with a kind of mock self-assurance approaching bluff. And he was stepping very rapidly along, pushed by uninvited and irrevocable events, with inelegant steps, as if his body were being bunted from behind. A big truck-load of baggage at the Lockwood

Station platform had given him the same feeling a few moments previously. He wished the train would go more slowly, because of the importance of the journey. After all it was the real transition, the deportation from one phase of life to the unrealized next one, and certainly no occasion for being hurtled along with terrific speed, but rather one for slow adjustment of mind and body. He had never worn as stiff a collar, but the clothier in Lockwood must be relied upon. The seat of his trousers seemed tight, but that too, was undoubtedly a matter for the ruling judgment of an expert.

Well, he would try to bluff it bravely. Just what he would do on reaching Merlton was uncertain. There were the hotels, if necessary, but he felt that the sooner he got right down to work the better for his peace of mind. He wanted to go to the university, but knew that, unless he could discover some way of circumventing a high school training, college halls were very distant. Here again he would have to rely on expert opinion. In fact, he philosophized that he was now in a world where he was no longer independent. The lazy come and go of Lantern Marsh was realized to be at an end. He was now exploring hazy territory and so decided to keep out his feelers. There was nothing else for it than to be patient and wait, and go easy, and keep his feelers out. After all it was a wonderfully thrilling experience, containing as much opportunity for spiritual enjoyment as for discomfort.

Pulling down his collar out of the crease of his neck he cast his eye at a book which his seat companion was reading. The title at the top of the page was "Biochemistry." The reader was a young, black-haired fellow with an eager, enthusiastic face, but with a deep,

vertical crotchet of puckered skin between his eyebrows. That he was not reading for pleasure was doubly evident from his impatient manner of turning over new pages and from the monotonous tone in which, from time to time, he half spoke what he read. At length he finished a chapter, slammed the book shut and sat comfortably back with a sigh of relief. Mauney would not have ventured to speak to him, and was therefore pleasantly surprised, anon, to be addressed by the other.

"Awful stuff this!" said the stranger, tapping the closed volume with his knuckle.

"What is Biochemistry?" Mauney enquired curiously.

"Oh!" drawled the other, with a perplexed look, "it's the study of the chemical processes that go on in the animal body—awful headache, this stuff! Are you going to Merlton?"

"Yes," nodded Mauney.

"Go to the University?"

"Not yet."

"But you are later, eh?"

"I don't know," Mauney explained. "I want to go, but I have'nt had enough education to get in."

"You don't need much, I can assure you," said the other. "You've got your Collegiate off, I suppose?"

"No. Just public school."

"Well, of course that means a devil of a lot of preliminary ahead of you, and they're getting crankier up there every minute about that stuff. By the way," he said, after stealing an apraising glance at Mauney's face and clothing. "My name is Lee."

Mauney took his proffered hand and shook it warmly.

"Bard is mine," he said, a little awkwardly.

"We may as well know each other, Mr. Bard," said Lee, sitting up and smiling. "I'm just going back to the city to write off some sups. Do you know what I mean? Well, I hope you don't ever learn by experience. I got ploughed in Biochemistry, this spring. Do you know what I mean? Well, at the exams, you see, I went down hard on this stuff. So I've got to plug it up and write it off, now."

Lee followed his explanation by a glance of curiosity at Mauney's face before smiling indulgently.

"You'll get on to these college expressions sooner or later. Of course I like my work well enough," he explained, "and I shouldn't have dropped on this dope, didn't expect to either—it's kind of made me bolsheviki for the present. I hope you'll pardon my seeming rudeness if I continue to sink myself in this book?"

"Certainly, shoot into the dope, hard," ventured Mauney.

With a look of surprise Lee settled down into the depths of the seat and, before commencing a new chapter, stole a sly, curious glance at his new acquaintance, while Mauney, faintly satisfied at his recent attempt at slang, found courage and a somewhat new belief in his own powers of adaptation.

Lee, buried in a new chapter, continued to frown, slap the pages, and repeat ill-temperedly passage after passage, while Mauney would turn from the window and its vision of long farm lands turning rapidly past like the spokes of a great wheel, to snatch a glance over his companion's shoulders, to read perhaps a snatch of technical treatise concerning the combustion of fatty acids (whatever they might be), or to notice complicated designs of apparatus, reminding him of puzzles he had

seen in the *Beulah Weekly*. Lee, he noticed, was an appealing sort, though delicate, with long, thin hands and a thin body that bent easily into his slouched attitude of reading. Over his vest he wore a thin, low-cut jersey whose front was decorated with a large, blue M, ornamented with wings sprouting from the two upright limbs of the letter. Mauney deduced that it stood for Merlton, probably being a trophy bestowed for prowess in some particular sport at the University of Merlton. At length Lee finished another chapter and closed the book with a snap, dropping it into his black hand-bag under the seat.

"That's enough of that," he said. "Pass or no pass I'm not going to read any more of it. And, more than that, I'm going to see a good show to-night. What do you say if we go?"

"How long before we reach Merlton?" Mauney asked.

Lee glanced at his wrist watch. "It's two-forty. We don't get there till six-thirty. Deuce of a long trip! It'll be too late to do anything but a show."

"I'd like to go all right" Mauney admitted, "but I want to find some place to stay."

"What kind of digs are you after—you know, what kind of a place?"

"I haven't a very good idea myself."

Lee studied Mauney's open face for a moment as if trying to decide what category to place him in. It was evident from his own expression that he found something likeable about his new acquaintance, for he smiled with combined indulgence and curiosity.

"What have you been working at, Mr. Bard?" he asked.

"Farming, all my life."

"Oh, I see. Decided to shake the plough now?"

Mauney nodded. "Yes, I wouldn't have stayed so long at it, only you know how circumstances sometimes determine a fellow's fate."

"Sure thing, you said something," admitted Lee, a little sadly. "I'd have been in the army except for the astounding circumstance, quite a surprise to me, that some imaginative medical officer fancied he heard a menagerie inside of my chest. There's never been a thing wrong with me," he affirmed, "but just because that chap with the stethoscope didn't like the way I breathed, I am here to-day, plugging along in third year medicine. Why! I managed to clean up the intercollegiate tennis last fall. I cite that merely as evidence of health."

"You can't tell me anything about it," Mauney laughed. "I got turned down on account of my eyes. But I only have to wear glasses when I read. Eyes are good. I'd have been away long ago except for that. It's tough luck to get treated like that. However, I'm ready any time they want to take me. But, war or no war, Mr. Lee, I'm not going to beg them to take me. I practically did that once; so I feel it's their move next."

"Hear, hear! My heart's in the right place, too. Though I hate to be regarded as a slacker by those who don't know the details. Sometimes I think it takes as much grit to face the home forces as the Germans. I mean the why-aren't-you-at-the-war brand. However, got to put up with it. Say," he added presently. "How would you like to get a room at my boarding house?"

"Fine. Could I?"

"I believe you probably could," he said, "It's a queer sort of digs, but just unusual enough to be interesting."

It's worth making an effort to get into it, too. The bunch there are off the beaten path—never was quite able to size 'em up—but they all mind their own business. You know," he said reflectively, "I've been there over a year and I can't tell you just what keeps me there. I guess it's because we're all rebels."

"Rebels?" repeated Mauney, in great surprise.

"Surely," nodded Lee with a broad smile breaking over his face. "Do you know what it means to be out of love with life?"

"I—I should say I do. That's me exactly."

"I thought so, Mr. Bard," replied Lee with an intimate little sparkle in his eye. "I judged you to have something of the same spirit about you. Well, it's a kind of grouch that lurks under the surface, if you will. Anyhow, it's easily recognized by anyone who is a rebel himself."

Mauney's blue eyes narrowed as he glanced at his new friend's face.

"Are you a rebel, Mr. Lee?" he asked seriously.

"Certainly," said Lee. Then he laughed at Mauney's sober aspect. "Don't be alarmed. My disaffection has not, at present, any political aspect, you know. My rebellion is not against the government. It's just a plain, homely, disposition of grouch."

"I see," smiled Mauney. "Do you know, I like that."

"And I knew you would, my son," continued Lee, almost affectionately. "You've got inoculated, somehow, with the same virus. You've caught the disease somewhere. We belong to a great fraternity that doesn't wear any silver badge. A person has to be born to it, to some degree, and then he has to get properly messed up, into the bargain."

"How do you mean—messed up?"

"Oh, just that everything goes wrong. Plans smashed, ideas smashed, everything smashed," laughed Lee with just a small trace of queer seriousness in his face. "Fate picks out a few of us to join this big fraternity. We always know each other when we meet without any masonic sign. Our watchword is discontent—unexplainable discontent. We are just misfits, my son," he concluded, with a slap at Mauney's knee.

Mauney could not help liking his new friend who, though evidently not much older than himself, called him "my son" so easily, and who, either consciously or otherwise, had succeeded in establishing a most unexpected bond between them. But his skilful, verbal harangue on the present topic was still puzzling to him, so that, after a moment, he put a question.

"Do you mean that the people who live at this boarding house all belong to a secret fraternity?"

"Yes and no!" said Lee. "It's a fraternity, as I've said, secret enough from all who don't belong. But it hasn't any organized constitution and no particular purpose or aim." As he paused, his black eyes softened with a visionary aspect. "It's distributed all over the world. You don't join it. You're either in it or not. If you're in it you find it impossible to get too much worked up over any enthusiasm. You prefer irony to barbarous optimism. You retire by choice, into the shadow of things. Do you get me?"

"I think so, yes," nodded Mauney. "You all feel out of gear with things, all the time."

"That's it. You can't get an ideal which isn't sooner or later rendered a mere idea. Your hands slip off from the round edges of everything you grasp. You know

before you start that your efforts will eventually peter down to child's play. Well, well," he said, pulling himself up out of his half reverie. "I suppose I'd better read some more biochemistry."

"Do you like the study of medicine?" asked Maaney. Lee smiled.

"I like it all right," he nodded. "But it's just like me to get the wrong angle on it. I keep wondering about the profession—it's so damned illogical."

"How do you mean?"

"We patch people up after they're damaged, instead of trying to keep 'em from getting damaged. We throw out the life-line, but we don't teach 'em to swim. It's all topsy-turvy philosophy, upside down, cart before the horse. However," he said with a drawl as he opened his hand-grip to take out his book, "I've decided not to revolutionize the world, just yet. It's a game, my son, but worth playing, after all."

He was soon lost in the pages of his big Biochemistry volume again, and Maaney contented himself with reconstructing Lee's philosophy. It struck him as perhaps picturesque, but unnecessarily bleak. No, he did not quite agree with his new friend. There was use in things. Just the prospect of an education was sufficient now to lift Maaney into a mood of happiness. To turn from mental darkness to mental light, to learn of the mysterious forces that promulgated life on the globe and kept it living, to know how peoples had lived and how they lived now, to pierce the meaning of war. In short, to pick the pearls of knowledge from the vast, pebbled coast-line of life—this was a task and an opportunity that thrilled him with splendid resolve and high hopes.

When they reached Merlton Union the platforms bore

a busy swarm of humanity through which the two new friends made their way with difficulty to the great waiting room. Mauney had a sense of being suddenly dropped into a seething sea of being that emphasized his own minuteness. People sitting, tired and impatient. People walking eagerly about, searching for friends. People consulting official-looking clerks in information booths, or rushing at the heels of red-caps who carried their valises to departing trains. The great roar of the room rose to the high expanse of the roof, like the rushing sound heard in a sea-shell. Individual sounds were lost and swallowed up in the vague, but intense vibrations that beat back from the glazed ceiling, to be disturbed only by the deep, sonorous voice of a man by the gates who called the trains in measured periods, each speech ending in a wistful, sad inflection. Here were people, coming and going, as if it were the very business of life and not, as in Mauney's case, the great epoch-making event of his whole existence. At the curb, outside the front entrance, he was dismayed by the mad rush of snorting taxi-cabs, pausing but long enough to take their passengers before darting off down the crowded street.

"I'll tell you," said Lee, pressing his long forefinger against Mauney's vest buttons. "Suppose you give your baggage cheques to the city delivery here, then take my grip and go up to the boarding house. Tell Mrs. Manton I'll be up later. You don't need to say anything yet about getting a room there. Things are done very deliberately at seventy-three Franklin Street, as you'll find. Tell her you're waiting for me. Then just sort of edge in slowly. If she doesn't ask you to sit down,

just grab a chair and make yourself comfortable. Be sociable. Do you get me?"

Mauney nodded.

"I'm all for a show to-night," Lee continued, "so I'll be off to one now. If you're hungry ask Gertrude for something to eat."

"Who's Gertrude?" asked Mauney.

"The landlady, Mrs. Manton. She'll love you if you do. Don't be bashful, see? And I'll be home around midnight and we'll have a chat before we turn in."

Soon he had gone, leaving Mauney holding his grip and waving for a taxi. One promptly disjoined itself from a waiting line, while an attendant opened the door.

"Where, sir?" asked the driver, craning his neck about.

"No. seventy-three Franklin Street."

He nodded and away they flew through congested thoroughfares, missing other motor cars by what seemed veritable hair-breadths, passing noisy street-cars, avoiding wary pedestrians who ventured across their way. After traversing what appeared to be the business section of the city, they began to pass along quieter streets and eventually stopped in front of a respectable red-brick house. Mauney paid the driver and got out to inspect the residence. It was a three-storey building, squarish in appearance, with a side verandah leading to the only entrance. The cream-colored shades of the front lower room were drawn. As Mauney paused to survey the place a few drops of rain struck his face; so that he hurried up the broad steps, along the verandah to the door, and rang the bell. It was already growing dusk and he could make out nothing through the door-window. Presently a light was switched on and he

saw the figure of a man approaching, who, when he had opened the door, regarded Mauney silently from an expressionless face.

"Does Mrs. Manton live here?"

"Sure! Come in," invited the man. He was about forty—short, thick-set, agreeable. His smooth, flabby face, devoid of color, was as grey as his short hair, and he had lazy, mirthful, grey eyes, and a lazy smile that exposed many gold teeth. He struck Mauney as a flippant individual. When he had closed the door he turned about and called, "Ho, Gertrude!" Then he faced Mauney again.

"Is it going to rain?" he asked good-naturedly.

"It's raining now a little."

The man produced a penknife, opened it, and pried with the blade between his gold-filled incisors. "I knew it was going to rain," he said. "I've got the most expensive barometers here I could afford. These teeth have cost me more money than I've got in the bank, and they always ache before a storm. What do you know about that?"

Mauney smiled. "It's hard luck; that's all I can think of at the moment." He was trying to follow Lee's advice about being sociable, and striving with equal effort to gauge the stranger's disposition and character. He remembered that Lee had also mentioned the importance of making himself at home. Accordingly, he now removed his hat and hung it on the hall rack, then walked to a hall chair and seated himself comfortably, while the stranger followed his movements with an amused, curious smile.

"Ho! Gertrude!" he called again. Then, after lighting a cigarette and flipping the burnt match into an

empty brass jardiniere on the hall stand, he glanced at Mauney. "She's still the same old Gert," he explained, as if presupposing a former acquaintanceship to have existed between Mauney and his landlady.

"Is she?"

"Sure! She's in on a little game in the dining room now. I guess she's building up a jack-pot and don't want to decamp."

Just then a burst of mixed laughter was heard. The door at one side of the hall-way opened and Mauney obtained his first view of Mrs. Manton. Her appearance was not typical of landladies, as Mauney had fancied them. In fact her appearance denied that she was a landlady at all, but suggested that she had just walked out of a theatre at the opposite end from the audience. Mauney had seen pictures of actresses in magazines, and as he beheld Mrs. Manton the word "Spanish" flashed in his mind. She wore an extreme costume of black velvet, with yellow silk facings, and an artificial red poppy stuck into her heavy stock of jet-black hair. About her neck was a long string of pearls, and on her fingers diamonds were flashing in the light. For a moment she regarded Mauney curiously, then walked, with an unhurried, precise, but rhythmic grace that suited her solid, short form, until she stood near him. He rose.

"Good-evening," she said in a deep, purring voice that was very soothing. "I fear you have the advantage of me."

"My name's Bard," he said quickly, smiled, and stuck out his hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Bard," she replied with a brightening of her swarthy, pensive face.

"I came up to wait for Mr. Lee," he explained.

"Well, Mr. Lee is home on his vacation, Mr. Bard, and won't be back till about October, you know."

"Oh, yes, he will," Mauney corrected. "He'll be here to-night! I just came up on the train with him. You see he got ploughed in biochemistry, and had to come up to write the dope off. Stars and sups, you know."

"Indeed," she exclaimed. "Poor old Max! Well, we will be glad to have Max with us again, eh Freddie?"

"You bet. He's sure a winner, Gertrude," replied the man who was now introduced to Mauney as Stalton.

"Fred," she said, "you better go up and see if Max's room's all right, will you?"

"Sure thing."

"And now Mr. Bard," said Mrs. Manton, indicating the dining-room door by a graceful gesture of her jewelled hand. "We've got on a friendly game of poker, if you'd care to join with us while you wait for Max?"

"I've always been unlucky at poker," prevaricated Mauney, who had never seen the game.

"Ho," she laughed. "You're like me. I'm the greatest she Jonah that has been discovered to date. Never mind, it's only a nickel-ante."

"That's not much, is it?" he ventured.

"Of course, we never allow big games, you know," she explained, as her dark eyes indulged in a scrutiny of his features. "Just a pastime. May be you'd prefer to read, or perhaps just watch the game?"

"Look here," said Mauney, touching her on the breast with his forefinger, just as Lee had done with him at the Union Station. "I'm about starved—hungry as sin. Do you suppose you could rig me up a bite to eat?"

"Why, you poor boy!" she purred softly, and took his

arm to lead him to the dining room. "Just off the train. Of course you'll have a snack directly."

"Thanks, Mrs. Manton."

"Not at all," she said indifferently, in a tone that indicated that thanking was not quite normal to seventy-three Franklin Street. "Sadie Grote's in here. She'll fix you up."

The dining-room was a spacious chamber with a large central table. A drop-lamp, whose large oval shade in the design of a huge yellow water lily hung low over the table, distributed a cone of light that revealed four or five people busy at cards about the table. Mauney's eye caught the other details of the room—a large fireplace at one side, a long Chesterfield couch under the window at one end, with a man reclining on it, a side-board, with a mirror and a display of glassware upon it, a cabinet gramophone, several large easy chairs, and a smoker's ash stand.

"I can wait awhile for the grub," said Mauney, who was really too excited with his new boarding house to be hungry.

"All right. We'll all be eating after a while," Mrs. Manton replied. Then, turning to the crowd, "This is Mr. Bard," she said, simply, took her chair at the table and picked up her hand of cards. Mauney, left to his own devices, sat down in one of the easy chairs and familiarized himself with his surroundings. Besides his landlady were two other women, one addressed as Mrs. Dixon, a fleshy person of forty, with fat, ring-adorned fingers, the other, evidently Sadie Grote, a pretty wisp of a girl top-heavy with blonde hair. One of the men, known familiarly as "Doc," was a painfully bald individual of fifty, whose speech and gestures

breathed a foreign atmosphere, and whose erect body had a military poise. The other man, not over thirty, was heavily built, but had an effeminate smile that exposed teeth perfect enough to be envied by the most renowned beauty. He was called "Cliff," and seemed to have been fascinated by Mrs. Manton, although she treated him with discouraging indifference.

The man on the sofa was completely absorbed in a newspaper, behind which his face was hidden. He lay for fully twenty minutes without moving a muscle, with his long legs stretched out to the very end of the couch. Suddenly he crushed the paper between his hands, and swung himself up to a sitting posture.

"The damned thieves!" he exclaimed in an English accent. "Cutting wages at a time like this. The working man in England to-day is usually either over military age or else crippled from war service. To think of the curs cutting down their wages now! Well, it's only one more evidence of the fat-headed manner in which everything is done in England—England, the land of blunders!"

Mauney noticed with surprise that none of the people at the table were paying any attention to the irate Englishman's declamation—the more remarkable that he should continue:

"If they go on messing things up much worse, the working man is going to kick over and raise a bit of hell, and it will serve the skunks jolly well right. I hope that they put so big a land tax on the capitalists that they will lose every square foot of property they possess. It's not theirs, anyhow. It belongs to the working man."

Mrs. Manton presently glanced in his direction to

behold him still bathed in the glow of his enthusiastic pronouncement.

"What's wrong, Jolvin?" she purred softly. "Have they not yet recognized the rights of the working man? How discouraging!"

There was a note of sarcasm in her deep, melodious voice that irritated Jolvin. He had a long, thin face, scooped out at the temples and the cheeks, a narrow, black moustache directly under his long, thin nose, and a permanent dimple in the middle of his long chin. His long, narrow neck rose out of his collar like a jack-in-the-box, and he had an uncanny way of suddenly rotating his face, in conversation, full toward a speaker.

"Oh! damn it! Talk will you!" he fumed, looking at his landlady out of furious eyes, as if he had been much more content to have continued in monologue. "Some people are going to wake up one morning to discover the working man in possession of the helm of affairs!"

He jumped to his feet and stamped ill-temperedly toward the hall door.

"And," he resumed, as he opened the door quickly, but paused to give Mrs. Manton the full benefit of his rage, "this is no dream of a fantastic mind. It's just truth, damned-well truth!"

He closed the door violently, while Mrs. Manton merely put up her hand to tidy her hair, as if Jolvin's commotion had disturbed its excellent coiffure. Then Stalton came softly in from a back hall-way.

"What's the matter with Jolvin to-night?" he enquired casually.

"Just ranting on Bolshevism, as per usual," replied Mrs. Manton, as she dealt out the cards.

"Don't ever get him started on socialism," Stalton advised. "He got me cornered one night and just about proved that it was sinful to own property at all. It gave me a Sunday-school feeling right down to my boots to think how righteous I was in at least that one respect."

"That man does irritate, occasionally," she admitted. "However, he's not such a poor sort, at other times."

"I wish I could play the guitar as well as he can, Gertrude," put in Miss Sadie Grote, as she picked up her cards and examined them.

Stalton walked to a chair, which he pulled up near Mauney's.

"That bird," he said, indicating the door through which Jolvin had just gone, "is the only Englishman I ever met who hated England. He's troubled with a bad form of ingrowing Anglophobia, and he does everything possible to Westernize himself. He even plays a Hawaiian guitar. Any time during the night we're liable to hear it mewling like a cat up in his room. If he keeps on he's certainly going to qualify for one of the leading parts in a murder scene."

Mauney laughed.

"I suppose he's kind of a rebel," he ventured.

"Rebel!" repeated Stalton, with a puzzled look in his eyes. "How do you mean?"

Mauney realized just then that Lee's categorization of the people at seventy-three Franklin Street was no doubt an individualistic bit of philosophy somewhat beyond the people themselves, so he accordingly changed the topic of conversation. He was finding them all very interesting studies—the most unusual people he had ever known. But, as the evening wore on, dissi-

pated by cards and gramophone selections, scraps of dancing executed fantastically by Mrs. Manton and the enamoured stranger, whose name he did not learn, he grew gradually weary of the desultory entertainment, and wished Lee would return. At length he came. After receiving warm welcomes from everyone present, he led Mauney up to his room. The hallway on the first floor was too dark to give any view of the place except that Lee's room was at the front end of the corridor on the right side, and when illuminated was seen to be a large, comfortably furnished chamber with two windows facing Franklin Street, and a flat-topped desk placed between the windows. Upon the desk were a long row of large technical volumes, an ink-well, blotters and a ruler. There were two big, leather-upholstered, easy chairs in the outer corner of the room, facing each other, and a small smoker's stand between them. Lee raised the windows to freshen the stale air, then turned in a general survey of the familiar place.

"What do you think of the bunch?" he asked casually, as he lit a cigarette.

"I like them fine," said Mauney. "They're quite clever, these people."

"Oh, yes. So they are," Lee agreed, as he dropped wearily into one of the chairs and waved Mauney to the other. "Are you smoking?"

Mauney raised his hand.

"You know, Mr. Lee," he smiled, "I'm just a green-horn from the country. I've had quite a lot of new experiences to-day already. I'm not snobbish about tobacco, but I'd rather leave that for another day or two, if you don't mind."

"Fine," laughed Lee. "You'll get along in the world all right!"

"Do you think so?"

"Surely. You don't need to take my word for it. I find that Gertrude is an extremely shrewd judge of men, and I'd like to tell you what she said about you—if you wouldn't misunderstand her."

Mauney was greatly interested. "No, I won't. I like her a lot. What did she say?"

"Well, she said in the kitchen, while she was making those sandwiches, 'Where did you get this big, refreshing country breeze, Max?' I told her you were coming to the city for the first time to take up some kind of academic work, and she looked up at me as if surprised. 'Clever kid,' she said. 'He walked right over to me like a confidence man at the start. I pretty near gave him my heart.' Now, of course," added Lee, "when Gertrude feels that way about anybody, he's elected!"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the house is yours. You can stay and board here. In other words, you gibe, fit in, dovetail—do you get me? I told her you might like to remain here, and she just nodded, which means that to-morrow night, without anything being said about it, a room will be ready for you to occupy."

"Do I pay in advance?" Mauney enquired.

"No, no," laughed Lee, as if at his friend's inexorable ignorance; "you don't do anything of the kind. She may not ask you for money for a month. Then she's liable to suggest it very delicately, and, as a rule, you give her just a little more than it's worth—see?"

You pay for atmosphere here and for her peculiar selection of other guests."

"How much should I pay a month?"

"Oh, forty-five or fifty is what I usually contribute. And then, if you ever see any ice-cream or fruit or a new victrola record or anything in that line, downtown, you just buy it and bring it home as an occasional treat."

Mauney sat back in his chair and smiled. There was a flush of comfort in his face and a new relaxation. He liked the place, although he was still overcome, almost exhausted, by the swift changes of the day. Especially did he like Maxwell Lee, this comforting fellow with visionary dark eyes who sat opposite him now, smoking meditatively as if quite aware of the epoch-making significance of a simple railway journey; as if he realized how great an event it had really been to Mauney's inexperienced soul.

CHAPTER II.

MAUNEY PREPARES FOR COLLEGE.

"I consider it most becoming and most civilized to mingle severity with good fellowship, so that the former may not grow into melancholy, nor the latter into frivolity."—Pliny the Younger, Ep. Bk. 8.

WHEN he awoke in the morning, he was vaguely conscious of some one talking in the room. Over the edge of his counterpane his eye caught the pyjama-ed figure of Lee, shaving in front of the dressing-case mirror, and he soon realized that Lee was talking to him.

"—thinking it over," Lee was saying. "And I believe your best stunt is to look up a tutor who will give you your matriculation work extra-murally. That won't tie you down to any formality of going to a high school. You can work as hard as you like, and, at your age, you'll clean up that preliminary dope just like ice-cream."

Mauney sprang out of bed and shaved. He fell in with Lee's suggestion and decided that he would look up a tutor that very morning. He was thrilled with excitement and happiness. Outside the windows, rain was splashing on the sills, but it was the merriest, gladdest rain he had ever listened to. Before him stretched the great adventure of education, rich in its promise of compensation for all the years of miserable waiting. In fact, could it be quite true that he was actually con-

scious? Was he not rather treading the air of a delightful dream, from which, at any moment, he would awake to bleak realities?

There were only three at the breakfast table when they descended—Mrs. Manton, seated at the end in a rich dressing gown of yellow silk, and Jolvin, with Stalton, at one side. The Englishman, fully dressed as for business, ate in dignified silence. Stalton, whom to know was to love, sat in his shirt sleeves without a collar, as if he had no other business in life than to act in the capacity of a cross-corner mentor for his landlady. Mauney was assigned to a place between the two men, while Lee sat down at the opposite side.

"It's a grand morning, Mr. Bard," said Stalton, as he poured some medicine into a spoon from a large bottle by his place. Perhaps, thought Mauney, Stalton's gray hair and flabby grey face were evidence of some chronic ailment—the wearing effects of pain. He felt sorry for his table companion.

"Hello," laughed Lee, glancing across at the bottle, "What are you taking now, Freddie?"

"This is a new consignment of dope, Max," he replied good-naturedly. "It's guaranteed to contain the real wallop. Made up of yeast, raisins, vitamins and monkey glands. Don't be surprised to see me challenging the heavy-weight champion next spring."

Jolvin, whose mind at the moment may have been grappling with serious business problems, was evidently irritated by Stalton's remark. Suddenly his face whirled directly about toward Mauney, who nearly jumped with astonishment. "For God's sake," whispered Jolvin, "I wish he'd stop that stuff at breakfast."

Then his head snapped back to receive the last spoonful of his cornflakes.

"One would fancy," he said aloud, "it would stop raining!"

"Yes," murmured Stalton. "One would. But I guess there's a few bucketfuls left up there yet."

"How's the tooth this morning, Freddie?" enquired Miss Grote, as she walked into the room.

"It's still in my head, Sadie, but I expected it would jump out, about two this morning.

"For God's sake," whispered Jolvin into Mauney's ear; "he can't talk about anything, but teeth—teeth!"

He made a nervous stab at a rasher of bacon and cleared his throat. "I fancy," he said aloud, "we'll be getting some prime weather after this!"

"Yes, no doubt," replied Stalton. "This rain ought to prime anything, including the cistern pump."

Mrs. Manton cast a reproving look at Stalton, shook her head hopelessly, sighed, and continued her breakfast. Mauney, in the best of spirits himself, unconsciously cast his sympathy with Stalton.

"Did you hear the rain on the roof last night, Mr. Stalton," he asked, by way of making conversation.

"Sure thing."

"Did it help you to sleep?"

"It doesn't affect me like that, Mr. Bard," he answered. "Unfortunately I passed through a period of my life when I had the rain without the roof, and rain ever since brings up the past. And then, in this kind of weather my teeth are always—"

"For God's sake," exclaimed Jolvin aloud, bolting from the table, stamping indignantly into the hall, and

presently banging the front door behind him, as he left the house.

"What's wrong with that long drink?" purred Mrs. Manton.

"He's just acting natural," Stalton said. "I knew he got out of bed over the foot. He's had more hard luck with his uncle's estate in England, too, and I knew he'd scoot if I said anything more about teeth."

"Well, he can tame himself," Mrs. Manton submitted calmly. "This is not an institution for the nervous, and if Jolvin doesn't like it, he'll discover that there aren't many invitations out to remain."

"These fits of his are getting more frequent," Stalton remarked.

"He'll have to mix his drinks a little better than that anyhow," said the landlady. "Don't you think so, Max?"

"It takes all kinds of people to make a world, Gertrude." Lee reminded her. "I feel so darned cut up about my biochemistry, I can't be expected to give an unbiased judgment."

"Poor boy. You'll get it, all right. When do you write?"

"This morning."

Mauney accompanied his friend, whom he began to address now as Max, down to the university and, after Lee had disappeared into one of the buildings, stood thrilled by the spectacle before him. Here, surrounding the square, reposed the exemplary specimens of architecture that housed the various faculties. Max, in leaving, had pointed them out hurriedly—medicine, industrial science, Methodist theology, the great library, the convocation hall, the gymnasium, and last, but most

impressive, the arts building, a solid, reposeful mass, as sure as learning itself, with its vine-dressed, dull grey walls of stone, its turreted tower, its marvellous gothic entrance, leading from the common day, past its embellished arch, into the dim twilight of contemplation. The square was belted by a gravel road, serving the various buildings, and was itself divided into eight triangular lawns by wide cinder paths, crossing from side to side and from corner to corner. It was a pleasant view, for the art of the landscapist had relieved the conventionality of the pattern by maples and ash-trees, distributed over the lawns, and by clusters of spiræa and barberry set attractively at the edges of the paths. The square was nearly deserted, save for one or two students who sat on the benches reading.

Mauney wished that with the fall opening he could be ready to enter upon his college course, but, knowing this to be impossible, turned sadly away, but yet with burning ambition, to find the tutor whom Max had recommended. He was discovered in a little office on College Street, a small, withered individual, almost swallowed up in the cluttered disorder of his administrative quarters. His yellow face, creased like old parchment, bent into a mechanical smile as he listened to Mauney's desires. For a moment he fingered the paper-knife on his desk, then cast a weary look at his young customer through tarnished silver-rimmed spectacles.

"The matriculation requirements, Mr. Bard," he said, in a cultured, but infinitely dreary voice, as if repeating a stereotyped speech, "are becoming increasingly onerous. The departments of the University of Merlton have established rather severe standards for college entrance, and I fear you will experience dis-

heartening difficulties in attempting to gain matriculation status within the limits of a single winter term. However, your ambition is indeed commendable and, with perseverance, combined with extra tutoring, you may perhaps be able to succeed. The course that I would recommend"—he reached for a folder and, opening it, ran his yellow forefinger down its pages—"is partly a correspondence course, but partly, also, one of personal supervision, especially in science subjects. The cost of this course is considerable, but I am glad to be able to quote an average of sixty per cent. successes over a period of the last fifteen years. Other preparatory tutors have not, unfortunately, been able to compete with these figures. The fees are payable strictly in advance, and if you decide to embark upon the course, you are promised the same individual, careful attention that is given to everyone."

Mauney questioned nothing, but embarked. He was almost delirious with happiness over the proceedings, the enrolment, the purchase of a score of interesting books which the tutor recommended, and the prospect of commencing so quickly the life for which he had longed. His room at seventy-three Franklin Street, next to Max's, was soon a student's den, with its own table, its own volumes and its easy chairs. His life became a very pleasant thing, for, with his daily visits to the little office on College Street, and the diversions of the boarding house, he found what seemed to him a wealth of variety. He was astonished at his own contentment and at the self-sufficient quality in him that scarcely, if ever, caused him to think of his former home, or to reflect upon the dearth of relatives in his new existence. He wrote to his aunt in Scotland, expressing high satis-

faction with his present occupations. He settled down in the loved quietness of his room, to master the rudiments of education. Never once did he stop, weary, for with the sharp appetite of a starved mind, he thought of nothing but more information, and more.

Max, who had been successful in his supplementary examination and was now engaged in the fourth year of his medical course, frequently dropped into Mauney's room for a smoke and a chat. Max never spoke about his own home, and Mauney refrained from questioning him. The basis of their friendship was something personal and gloriously indefinite, that neither thought of analyzing. They felt at home with each other, and never, from the very beginning of their acquaintance, did anything disturb this quite unaccountable understanding. Mauney always felt that there was a hidden thought at the centre of Max, with which some day he would be favored, for behind his dark and often weary eyes great dreams seemed to pass, greater than the drawl of his clever and sarcastic tongue. He ventured to think that perhaps Max had drifted into a profession for which his nature disqualified him, for he naturally gained the impression that a medical student needed to be, in one particular sense, a feelingless person, with certain vulture-like qualities to steel him against the revoltingly physical aspects of his work. The skull in Max's wardrobe, the illustrations in his books—there were many symbols of the idea. In secret, however, Max was evidently no materialist, but sought the wide comfort of philosophic generalities. No one, to be sure, would suspect it at seventy-three Franklin Street, where he was known by his smile, but Mauney would catch

the plaintive note in some quiet remark, as when one evening, in discussing college work in general, he said:

"Wrap up your colleges and throw them in the ocean. They furnish us a few years of diversion, but after that there's life, and, strange to relate, Mauney, my son, they have not prepared us for that."

Mauney excused such criticisms of the university on the basis of a personal warp in Max's character, forgave him for what seemed a vandal attitude, and went on believing more firmly than ever in the light that spread from the lamp of learning. By its flame, comforted and inspired, he forgot the passage of time. He failed to notice the blush of late autumn that swept like a passion over the trees of the city, scarcely saw their bare arms raised in supplication to the greying skies, nor heaven's response of swift winds carrying fleecy burdens. Not until the firm banks of snow began to settle down, smaller and smaller, under the warming suns of a windy March, and energetic streams of murky water rushed along the street gutters, did he wake from his steadfast dream to realize that his term was nearly over. Then came a sharp bout with the examinations and at the end of May he stood looking curiously down at the withered old tutor who was smiling less stiffly, less professionally, than usual.

"I am pleased to tell you," he said, "that you have gained your university entrance standing. Your work with me in the preliminary subjects has been, to say the least, good, and it will afford me pleasure to produce documentary evidence of your success." He paused to reach a small certificate from a drawer. "This," he continued, handing it to Mauney, "should be carefully preserved and forwarded to the university in

making your application for admission thereto, sometime before September."

"Thanks."

"And before you go," said the tutor, rising stiffly from his chair, "let me express the pleasure I have had in overseeing your early academic career. Moreover, I would be interested to learn what particular course you contemplate taking at the university."

This was a new idea to Mauney. He looked at the instructor for a moment, with a perplexed expression.

"I'm much interested in people," he said, "and I think if I could get a course in history it would suit me."

"Remember," cautioned the old man, lifting his finger as if admonishing a wayward son, "history is a culture course which, from the financial standpoint, leads you nowhere. It would fit you only for teaching, a profession which, as I have learned from acrid experience, is not perfectly appreciated by the public. You have other courses to choose from, the more practical ones, as they might be called, such as engineering, law, medicine."

"Well, I'll have to consider the question," Mauney replied.

"Just so. In the meantime, I would be glad to advise you on any points and to see you, from time to time, in order to learn of your academic progress."

There was a light almost of kindness in the wrinkled, yellow face as he bade him good-bye. Mauney did not know how seldom that light had been there under similar circumstances, nor did he know that the affection of the old tutor was the same kind of affection that he unconsciously inspired in most of his associates. Burning

with gleeful happiness over his success, he hurried home to tell Max.

"Well, you old bear!" exclaimed Lee, violently shaking Mauney's hand on learning the news. "You couldn't have done better. I'm as happy as if I'd done it myself."

"Behold the hero," Max said, as they went into supper together. "He's just laid 'em all out. Four years' work in one."

"Hurrah!" shouted Mrs. Manton, putting her arms about Mauney's neck and kissing him prettily on the cheek. "I knew you'd do it, Mauney," she said.

"Maybe you did, Gertrude," he laughed, trying to cover his embarrassment, "but I didn't expect that. However, don't think I didn't like it."

Even though Mrs. Manton's impulsive embrace was decidedly consoling, Mauney nevertheless disliked it. He felt immediately afterwards that he would increase his diligence to detect her next time before it was too late. He accused himself of being perhaps by nature too cold. But from the evening, some years since, when he had felt a woman's hand upon his own, he had disliked the feeling. A woman's hand was too soft. It reminded him unavoidably of a snake, and made him shiver. This thesis ran through his private thoughts a good deal. He did not know women. He thought they were rather pleasant beings at times, but the danger of having their warm, soft hands suddenly upon him, inspired an attitude of caution. He felt confident of managing them in conversation, but confidence flew to the winds at the approach of hands, or arms, to say nothing of lips.

The summer months passed with snail-like tardiness. Having no place in particular to go, and nothing in particular to do, he remained in Merlton at his boarding house, and divided his time between reading and making excursions on foot, exploring the city. He now seized his first opportunity to gratify a long desire, and spent many of his mornings on the river. Max, who had this time passed his annual examinations without stars, had gone out west to teach school for the summer, in order to make enough money to finance his final year in medicine. The balance of the personnel at the boarding house remained unchanged, until one morning at breakfast he learned that Jolvin was about to return to England. The news came from Stalton, who said he had been talking to Jolvin the night before.

"Gertrude," he said, "do you know what's happened to that bird? He's fallen into a big estate—his uncle's estate. Why, it's worth a couple of hundred thousand. I saw the lawyer's letter last night. What do you know about that?"

Mrs. Manton ate in silence for a moment. "Do Jolvin's socialistic beliefs prevent him from accepting it?" she asked.

"Not very much!" Stalton replied with sarcastic emphasis. "And, by the way he was talking last night, he's forgiven England for being such a dough-headed outfit. Why, that fellow came out here two years ago like an understudy of Columbus. England? Not if he knew it. And now I'll bet he gets the first boat home. Just watch him skidaddle."

It was not many minutes until Jolvin, the centre of conversation, came down to breakfast, unusually smart, his face wreathed in smiles.

"Good morning, people!" he said expansively, with a very full bow. "Isn't it a lovely morning? Good-morning Stalton!"

"How do you do?" said Stalton crisply.

After taking his seat, the Englishman, noticing the silence of the table, thought perhaps to stir up conversation.

"You know," he began, glancing at his dish, "these corn-flakes are really beastly grotesque things. In England one scarcely sees them. They are, I fancy, an expression of American commercialism which invades even the time-honored ritual of breakfast."

Stalton suddenly dropped his spoon on the table.

"Well, I'm damned," he said, simply, and once more took up his spoon, having received a stern look from Mrs. Manton.

Jolvin appeared not to have heard Stalton's remark, but continued, "But, of course, America is too busy to cook porridge. There is no leisure or time for what one might call a comfortable dignity."

"All this don't jibe very well with what you usually say about England," Stalton remarked. "Most of the time you seemed to hate the word."

"Not at all," argued Jolvin. "Any criticisms I have ever made of England were meant most heartily. But they were criticisms, not blasphemies. If I were indifferent to England, I should never bother even to criticize."

"Have it your way, Jolvin," said Stalton. "But you were always damning the leisure class. Now you're praising them."

"I still damn them for their faults. Why, then, should I not praise them for their virtues?"

"Sail right ahead," invited Stalton. "You're in good form this morning. Got me outclassed, that's a cinch."

Even without Jolvin the place was still a most unusual boarding house. Mauney had learned, by this time, some of its tacitly-established principles. In the first place Mrs. Manton, at thirty-five, being widowed as was understood, regarded her house as a master hobby. Great attention was bestowed upon the furniture, the rugs and the walls. She wanted her guests to be comfortable and, to that end, would put herself about unceasingly. No advertising of vacant rooms was ever done, for it was better to have an empty room without a monthly revenue, than a full room with an unknown, undesirable stranger. Certain standards had to be satisfied. Mrs. Manton's boarders had to possess what she tersely designated as "*savez*." This meant a number of things. It meant the faculty of living in harmony with other boarders, of being informally polite and not impolitely formal. It meant keeping in the background all grandiose ideas, but at the same time indulging in enough conversation to register one's consciousness. It meant that one should not comment upon the doings of others, but at the same time that one should avoid doing anything to invite comment. It meant even this, that if one's breakfast were not placed before him as quickly as desired, he was expected to go to the kitchen and get it; or if one's bed was not made up, the understanding was that it be made up by oneself. And finally, of course, that after a few days' residence as an introduction, one would notice that the landlady was to be addressed familiarly as "Gertrude."

Mrs. Manton preferred men to women boarders. Mrs. Dixon was permitted because her husband was a good

sort, with funds of information about racing horses and the track in general. Sadie Grote, a stenographer down town, was agreeable and sweet, very unselfish and therefore helpful. Women had often been under consideration. At one time Mrs. Manton conducted an experiment by letting the whole top flat to four university girls. They remained a whole term, but when the last of their baggage had left the front door in the spring, Mrs. Manton had turned to Stalton with all the impatience of a disappointed experimenter.

"Freddie," she had vowed, "never again! If we ever have girls, they've got to have blood in their veins, not pasteurized milk. Isn't it pitiful how that dreadful disease known as brain-wart seems to get them."

There was no gainsaying it—eligibility to seventy-three Franklin Street required unusual, indescribable qualities. If Mrs. Manton had written down rules of conduct (which, of course, she never did), and hung them on the wall, they would have read much as follows:

"1.—Avoid extremes.

"2.—Nourish high-falooting ideas, if you wish, but keep them under your hat.

"3.—Be as happy as you choose, but don't explode with nauseous hilarity, since somebody else may be sad.

"4.—Be downcast when you must, but don't spread your gloom.

"5.—Be erudite, but don't teach your ideas.

"6.—Be chuck-full of anything you choose to be chuck-full of, but sit on it.

- "7.—Remember that seventy-three aims at averages, prefers neutral tints and the soft pedal.
- "8.—Don't effervesce—most of us have passed that stage.
- "9.—Don't criticize—we all have to live.
- "10.—Live, but don't plan. To-day was to-morrow, yesterday."

Mauney felt unlikely to transgress many of these tacit rules of conduct. He was quiet enough in disposition to melt into the quiet shadows of the place, and was fond enough of the inhabitants to pattern his superficial manners after theirs. But he well knew that there was danger of breaking one of the rules. He had not yet passed the stage referred to in number eight, and was quite liable to burst forth enthusiastically to some one. His enthusiasm for his books and the sheer happiness he obtained from them was dangerously concealed. It troubled him. He wanted to talk to Max Lee, and longed for his return. Then, too, the present, though charming, was so incomplete! The others at the boarding house truly lived for the present moment, but Mauney was feeling the great future beating like a pulse. He was standing like a benighted sailor on the dark coast, feeling the break of waves he could not distinctly see, and coveting the dawn when all would be revealed.

CHAPTER III.

THE OTHER HALF OF THE CLASS.

"A morning sun, and a wine-bred child and a Latin-bred woman seldom end well."—Herbert's Collection.

MAUNEY met Lorna Freeman the first day of college. He did not know her name at first, but she impressed him. This was partly because certain grooves, instituted that day, promised to guide her in his company for the next four years, brilliant in prospect. It happened that out of the great University of Merlton, only two first year students had chosen the "straight" history course. Many others had elected to take combined courses of history plus something else or other, but of the entire academic population of the first year only two showed the real specialist thirst for history alone. This meant that they would receive much that the others would not. They would be inducted more deeply into the records of human development. They would be together, a class all by themselves, at times, penetrating further than the dilettanti, who stopped with constitutional history of Germany. For these two out-and-out students there would be interesting journeys afield.

He faced Lorna Freeman, therefore, with at least the vague knowledge that they two were the real, serious history class. They enrolled together with the as-

sistant professor of history, Dr. Alfred K. Tanner, M.A., Ph.D., D.C.L. (and other degrees usually taken for granted), in his particular upstairs office in one of the wings of the Arts Building. Miss Freeman had already submitted her name, just as any other student might have done, although there were reasons, as shall be seen, why it was superfluous. There were a score of students outside Dr. Tanner's door, waiting to be enrolled. But they were the part-timers, the non-specialists, the great unwashed. First attention must be given to the "straight" students, and Alfred Tanner had already given his attention to Lorna Freeman, had waved her to a stiff chair by the mullioned windows, and was now giving his attention to Mauney.

He was a big, energetic figure, even as he sat behind his flat-topped desk, with a look of keen awareness mixed with love of his work. He was grey, and bald, and hugely present. He leaned forward, gesticulating, snapping his grey eyes eagerly.

"Your name is what?" he asked.

"Bard."

"Bard, yes, Bard. What else?" he mumbled, as he wrote it down.

"Mauney."

"Mauney, yes; Mauney Bard! I see!" he looked up to subject Mauney to a severe scrutiny, during which he was absent-mindedly biting the nail of his little finger.

"And now, tell me, Mauney Bard," he said suddenly, aiming his plump forefinger at his new pupil, "Tell me, as well as you can—that's to say offhandedly—tell me exactly why you elected the straight history course?"

As he waited for an answer, he looked frowningly

toward the window, rubbed his nose, and held his head like a musician preparing to judge the quality of a chord of music.

"I would say the reason is simple enough," said Mauney.

"Good," commended Tanner, hammering the desk with his fist: "Simple enough? Yes? Good. All right, Bard; explain that. Tell me exactly why you elected it?"

"Because," said Mauney deliberately, "I've always wanted to understand the basic principles of human progress."

Tanner, still frowning at the window, mumbled in an absent-minded tone: "'Basic principles of human progress.' Yes; basic principles." Then, turning suddenly toward Mauney, he once more aimed his finger like a pistol at his face, while his voice came out with great clearness and deliberation: "Good for you. That's good, Bard, very good. Now, you will consult your time-table to find out your classes, and, by the way, it's a very small class this year." He turned toward the young lady seated by the window.

"Lorna!" he said.

"Yes! Uncle Alfred," she responded, in a clear voice, rising and gracefully approaching the desk.

"This is Mauney Bard—Miss Freeman!"

"How do you do," she said, with a faint smile and a nod of her head.

As Mauney bowed to her he noticed what clear, blue eyes looked fearlessly into his—calm, quiet eyes, with almost a suggestion of challenge. She was in a grey street costume that clung neatly to her spare, trim form, and wore a wide-rimmed black hat that sat

smartly upon her blonde hair and emphasized the natural pallor of her face. Her features were regular—a straight, refined nose, and thin, pretty lips. Her hands were extremely white. In different attire she could have played a part in a tableaux of the vestal virgins. She gave Mauney the same feeling as he had often experienced on looking across the meadows in the white light of a dewy dawn.

“You and Mr. Bard are the class,” laughed Dr. Tanner. “I hope that a friendship of reasonable rivalry may exist in the class, at all times, and that we will be able to find a room somewhere small enough to hold us.”

“I know a good place, Uncle Alfred,” said Miss Freeman.

“Where, then?”

“In the tower.”

“Well, we shall see, Lorna. We shall see. I don’t like it myself, but your suggestion merits consideration. H’m! The tower? Why on earth, my dear child, do you say the tower?”

“It isn’t in use.”

“No. Neither is the furnace room.”

“But the tower would give one such a philosophical elevation, just like old Teufelsdröckh in Carlyle’s book.”

“Oh, damn Carlyle!”

“Uncle Alfred!”

“Excuse me, Lorna,” he laughed mischievously. “Well—a place will be found. Now, you two, clear out. There’s a congregation of pilgrims near by, seeking the shrine of Magnus Apollo.”

Mauney did not know that the young lady with whom he walked down the worn stone steps of the history de-

partment was the daughter of Professor Freeman of that same department, whose office they passed on their way to the square. That was to be learned later. He only knew that she seemed an exceptionally fine person.

"Isn't it funny," he remarked, as they passed through the long corridor of the Arts Building. "That there should only be two of us in the class."

"No, I don't think it's funny," she said.

"I mean remarkable," he corrected himself.

"Well, it's a small class, certainly," she admitted. "There are few people who elect history as a straight course in Merlton, I believe. There should be more. I had wished there would be at least another woman."

"That would have made it pleasanter for you, Miss Freeman."

"Naturally."

Mauney noticed how little deference her manner contained. After he had left her at the front entrance and was on his way home, he wished that she had said: "Oh, I think we'll get along all right." But she had frankly admitted that another woman in the year would have made it pleasanter for her. Queer little blaming thoughts rose up in his mind against her. Then his thoughts changed. He began to admire her attitude. She had been absolutely frank. Was that not rather unusual? Was she not an unusually truthful kind of girl?

Presently he lost all touch with the argument. His brain was painting pictures of her, in dignified poses, representing some abstract idea of virtue. Finally he checked the images and cursed himself for being such a susceptible person. Miss Freeman was merely a

member of the class. Half the class had no right to be thinking such thoughts of the other half.

Nevertheless Mauney's first impression of university life was an impression of a woman, the first woman, in fact, who ever seriously disturbed his thoughts. That night he went into Max Lee's room to have a smoke. Max was tired after his summer of teaching, and was viewing the fifth and last year of his course with evident distaste.

"Sit down, Mauney, my son," he invited. "There's some good cigarettes. I'm glad you're taking to smokes. It will make things evenner between us. Well, how's things?"

"Not bad, Max," he replied, taking one of the easy chairs. "I got enrolled to-day, but haven't seen much of the university life yet. The assistant professor of history, Dr. Tanner, is a good fellow. I'm going to like him. He's got a big-brotherly sort of way with him, and I hope he lectures to us. I didn't see the professor yet. I suppose he's too important for a mere first-year man to meet so soon."

"How many are in your group?"

"Just two. Myself and a young lady, whom I met this morning in Tanner's office. Her name is Freeman—rather a good-looking person. She and I are apparently booked up together for a four-years voyage."

"In that case," smiled Max, "I hope she's companionable."

"Well," he replied very seriously, "that's doubtful. I wish there was another man along—somebody I could swear at when I felt like it. I'll make the best of it. She may be a really fine person. She's a niece of Tanner's, too. When do you start work?"

"To-morrow. Fifth year is pretty easy, but I wish it was over. I'm getting sick of the whole game."

"What's the matter?"

"Money, of course."

"Do you mean you're short of cash?"

"Sure. It's going to be tough wiggling to get through this year," he admitted. "Do you know, lack of money is the one, big, damned tragedy of my life?"

"Could I lend you some?" Maaney asked simply.

"Could you—what?" exclaimed Lee, sitting up. "Have you got money?"

"Some," admitted Maaney. "I could lend you a few hundred, if you need it."

"It's mighty decent of you, boy," Max said. "But I couldn't accept it."

"You don't need to feel that way."

"But I do nevertheless. No, I couldn't. That's all."

"Will you promise to let me know if you need it, later?"

"Look here," said Lee, settling back in his chair wearily. "I mentioned money only to dismiss the topic. I have no desire for wealth, and it's not immediate needs I'm thinking of. But here I am, fagged, at the start of my last year. When I get my M.D. I'll be as far from making money as I am now. It's getting to be an up-hill game, you see? There are certain things that a fellow wants to do some time before he dies, and getting married is one of them."

"Yes," said Maaney; "I suppose that comes into the scheme of things."

"The scheme of nothing!" scoffed Lee. "It simply gets into your blood when you meet the right woman."

"Am I to suppose," asked Mauney, in a teasing tone, "that you have met her?"

Lee was silent. His dark eyes were seriously looking into space, while his cigarette burned slowly between his fingers. Mauney realized that he had trampled carelessly on holy ground, but allowed his own silence to be his only apology.

"We've known each other long enough, Mauney, to understand how things affect us individually. I've never mentioned women to you. But there has been one, all along—this past year. She's real. I love her, but I can't tell her. She regards me only as a friend, and I wouldn't let her know how I feel for anything."

"You may wonder why I wouldn't," he continued. "Well, it's like this, I've made up my mind to go into research work next year, if my health remains good, and that kind of work won't give me a living, let alone enable me to marry. She's a girl who deserves happiness. Some one else will give it to her—not me."

"But the future may be brighter than you think, Max."

"I'm not a pessimist, Mauney," he said thoughtfully, leaning his head away back and closing his eyes. "I keep up a cheerful front most of the time. But I know—I simply know that I'll never marry Freda MacDowell."

"What is she like, Max?"

"I'll have you meet her some time. She's just like nobody else."

* * * * *

The opening days of college dragged slowly for Mauney. There were broken classes, time-tables not

yet perfected, initiations and other interfering details. Then, as if suddenly, the great university wheel quivered to a start and immediately swung around with remarkable smoothness and astonishing rapidity. In the daytime he sat listening to interesting lectures. In the evenings he lived with his books, deeply absorbed, as the weeks passed, with the problems of history. The records of human progress drew him with a warm, romantic attraction, for his imagination filled in the gaps that make history different from story. Characters became real and living. He rose and fell in sympathy with the dim fortunes of forgotten men. The formal page, with its caption and its paragraphs, faded into invisibility, leaving a glowing passage of actual life in which he brought himself temporarily to live.

It was very engrossing. Lorna Freeman found it so, too. She grew somewhat more friendly as the weeks passed, and by mid-term she would talk volubly with Mauney on historical subjects. He found her mind to be an acutely exacting one. It surprised him at first to discover such a mind in a woman. He thought her mental powers exceeded his own, because she could nearly always trip him up in an argument, a thing which she habitually did without exultation, but just methodically, as if tripping him up were part of her natural occupation. One day he learned that her father was Professor Robert Freeman, the seldom-seen head of the department. Mauney only saw him once, as he was pointed out walking thoughtfully through the corridors, a small, shrewd-appearing man, with grey eyes and a fixed smile.

History was absorbing, but our young hero was finding himself a good deal in thought about Lorna Free-

man. Not once had he ever said a thing even faintly familiar. One Monday morning, however, the temptation became unduly strong. Miss Freeman was seated in the seminary room by the long table, waiting for Dr. Tanner to take the class. It was winter, and her fur coat was laid neatly over the back of an empty chair. She never removed her hat, a prerogative gained from the intimate size of the class. As Mauney entered the room she looked up from a book and nodded.

"Good morning," he said, as he took a chair at the opposite side of the table. The large Gothic window at the front of the room commanded a view of the square, busy with students hurrying in various directions to their lectures. Dr. Tanner was late. They sat for fully a quarter of an hour, she quietly reading, Mauney stealing occasional glances at her pensive face. He tried to categorize Lorna Freeman, but could not. She did not fit into any types existent in his mind. She was definitely unusual. She attracted him on this account. There was also about her a certain queenliness. Why had they never once found anything to talk about except their work?

"I guess Dr. Tanner has been waylaid," he ventured at length.

"He's usually so punctual, too," she replied, and then continued reading.

"Do you ever get tired of studying?" he went on, determined to sound her.

"Well, naturally. Don't you?"

"I certainly do. I suppose if there was another man in the class I wouldn't mind it so much."

She glanced quickly up,

"Mind what, Mr. Bard?"

"Well, you see, Miss Freeman, perhaps there's something else in life besides continual study. I'd like to have somebody to chew the rag with, once in a blue moon."

She laughed.

"I don't know whether I'm qualified for chewing the rag or not," she said slowly. "What does the process signify?"

"Oh, just being sort of human, once in a while." There was a savor of mild cauterization in his tone that did not fail to reach his fair companion.

"And what, pray, does being human mean?" she inquired.

"Personal, I imagine. It means cutting down this constant barrier you keep up."

Her eyebrows lowered into a delicate frown, while her calm, blue eyes took on an expression half-way between surprise and displeasure. Then her pale face blushed.

"Well, Mr. Bard, I hardly understand!" she began. "I—"

"Hold on," he interrupted. "You mustn't be offended. That's the last idea in my head. If I didn't care at all I wouldn't have mentioned it."

He rose from the table and walked slowly, to stand by the great window. Her eyes followed his big form, and then rested on the back of his auburn head. She was not only puzzled, but even confused. After a hesitant moment she rose very slowly and then walked quickly to his side.

She touched him on the arm and looked up into his face.

"Oh, tell me," she said with some distress, "have I

done anything to hurt your feelings? You're such a genuine sort of a man, I really wouldn't want to hurt your feelings."

Mauney's blue eyes opened wide with surprise. He saw such child-like simplicity in her face that he smiled with admiration. He knew, just then, that he could have surrounded her shoulders with both his arms.

"Thanks," he said. "You've got me trimmed a mile for brains. That's the whole trouble."

"How do you mean?"

"Brains! You seem to have more of them than I have."

She frowned and glanced at his mouth.

"Well, does one usually say that, even if one thinks so?"

"I don't know," he answered seriously. "I said it because it's so, and because it's just your brains that keep you from treating me humanly."

"Oh—you mean chewing the rag?"

"Sure. You see, I don't know how to act with you. We're always together and I think it would be better to be a little more informal."

She placed the end of her fountain pen against her lips, pensively.

"Oh, let's!" she suddenly exclaimed. "That would be so nice, wouldn't it?"

"You see," he said, glancing toward the great square, "the trouble has been that I didn't know whether you had any heart or not. You have just been a sort of disembodied intelligence."

"Now, listen," she said, with a look of mild reproach. "I'm sorry if I've made things unpleasant. As you say, it would be better if there was another man in the

class. But there isn't likely to be. So, consequently, we will have to hit upon a reasonable *modus vivendi*. I think it's really awfully nice of you to be so frank. But, really, I don't quite understand what's wrong. I have always just been natural, I think."

"Perhaps. But we never took time to get acquainted," he explained. "I know what you think about the secession of the plebs, but I have no idea what you think about Tanner, or me, or music, or friendship. I don't know what your hobbies are, or what you think about in your spare time. I'd like to talk over these things if you ever find time."

"That's fine. Why shouldn't we? Will you come over to my house for tea some day?"

"When?"

"Why—any time. Say to-morrow?"

It was agreed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROFESSOR.

*"Let the fools talk, knowledge has its value."—
La Fontaine Fables.*

The tea at Freeman's was over.

Mauney was sitting in Max Lee's room after supper. These evening chats had become almost necessary. There was a time when they could both digest their evening meals downstairs in the dining-room in conversation with the rest. But now they neither felt ready to settle down to their studies without brief exchange of ideas and impressions.

"Anything new, my son?"

"Very new," admitted Mauney, lighting a cigarette. "Sit down, Max. I'm going to tell you about the Freeman's."

"The young lady, Lorna, I suppose," drawled Lee, as he sprawled in one of the easy chairs. "Women are always an interesting matter to me. And you're a popular devil with women, too—"

"Hold on—"

"True. Only they all wonder. They all wonder at you."

"At me?"

"Correct. You have a woman-hating nature. You don't warm up to women very much. That acts as a

challenge and keeps them coming. Do you do that on purpose?"

"I don't hate 'em, boy," he contradicted. "But I find they are very uncertain beings. Take this Freeman girl. Why, you'd travel fifteen days before you'd find another brain like hers, Max. She's like a steel-trap with the real snap to it. If she doesn't quite '*savez*' what you're talking about, she lights right into your remark, like an expert surgeon with a knife, and dissects it down to the heart. Then, having established your meaning, she frames her reply with the greatest care. . . . My God!"

"What's wrong?"

"You'd think she was being interviewed by a reporter. She's so precise about giving you her real, unbiased, judicial opinion. Whew! That brain of hers! It's wonderful, wonderful. I wish I had her brains, Max. A memory like a photograph album. Just turn it up, see? A judgment as deft as Solomon's—a good judgment—nothing leaks out of it—every point receives due weight. She's different. She speaks differently from most people. You never know what she's going to say. In fact, you can be sure she won't say what any other girl would say. Suppose you were to ask an average girl how she likes playing cards, what would you expect her to say?"

"Oh, she might say 'I adore cards,' or 'I'm not especially keen,' or 'I'd like to play them with you in a cosy nook,' and so forth, *ad nauseam*."

"Well, you'd never guess what she said. I asked her if she liked cards. She said, 'That all depends on the cards. If they're very new and slippery, I could sit for hours sliding them through my fingers; but if they

stick the least bit they make me shiver.' That's only one example. I asked her what her aim in life was."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"You impertinent rascal! Nobody does that."

"Why not?"

"Nobody has any aim in life—we just drift. Well, what did she say?"

"She sat back in her chair, smiling as if she enjoyed trying to figure it out. Then she said, 'Oh, Mr. Bard, did you ever listen to a violin until you were entranced?' I admitted that I had, at times, done so. 'Well!' she said, 'that's just it. I want to make my life just like a beautiful strain of music.' Now what do you think of that, Max?"

Lee frowned. "Frothy stuff to me. Unreal, hyper-imaginative, away off the trail, anæmic and supermellifluous."

Mauney laughed.

"You should have taken up writing," he said. "Queer family, these Freemans. I never met nor ever heard of anybody a bit like them. The professor is as gentle as a woman, but he gives you a feeling like a storm brewing. It's hard to express. He's courteous, refined, and pleasant, but he's diabolically clever. We haven't had any lectures from him yet. He was up in his study at home, slaying a book. She introduced me. He couldn't have been nicer, and yet—well, damn it—you can't get hold of him. He's like the ivory playing cards. He slips through your fingers. You think you've got him, and just then you notice that he's miles ahead of you."

Mauney then shook with sudden laughter.

"What's the matter with you?" Max said, glaring at him. "Been having a tooth extracted under gas?"

"No. But, I don't get that family at all. There's Mrs. Freeman, too. She's like a velvet comforter laid softly about your soul. Her voice is like velvet. She's more genuine, I'd wager, than her husband. But—oh, Lord!—there's some tragedy. Such an endless, engulfing tragedy; so big and endless that she has developed a kind of martyr attitude. She's like a Sister of the Perpetual Adoration, suddenly required to do penance by living a civil life."

"I'll bet the tragedy is her husband!" said Max, with a tone of certitude.

"Maybe it is. Well, Lorna's an only child. A queer girl; never met anybody like her, and—"

"You seem quite interested, though, don't you, my son?"

"Well, she's beautiful, Max."

"Oh, that changes the situation. More power to your elbow. But wait." His black eyes wandered casually over Mauney's open features and a smile stole over his lips. "Do you know, you're liable to fall for her."

"I know it. I've fallen already," Mauney admitted. "I'm in hot water. I want to be near her. She's like an Easter lily. I want to—to pick that lily."

A man never knows his capacity for action along any line until put to the test. Mauney, burdened with trying to find himself in many ways, received the added burden of a woman's attraction. It was all new to him. Never before had it happened. Here was Lorna Freeman, fresh as the lily to which he had referred, with him every day of the week except Sunday. Even the Sabbath began to hold her, too, for she ac-

cepted his invitations to stroll out Riverton way. There were long reaches of broad, board walks stretched beside the river where they perambulated, just like less sophisticated clerks and stenographers, who also found Riverton good. The Freemans never had a motor-car. Mauney did not realize that he had money enough to buy one. Consequently their feet took them wherever they went. Long strolls on Sunday, during which they got away from history entirely! In fact nothing could be farther removed from history. The vivid present swelled up before him so gigantically that he had trouble sticking to his books.

He wanted to say something to Lorna, but kept putting it off, partly because he was uncertain as to the thing itself, and partly because more preparation seemed necessary. He found that he could keep on looking at her for hours, but that, on attempting to describe his feelings, he was overtaken by a sense of diffidence. Would she quite understand him?

He was on the third term time-table now. Christmas and Easter were past. Spring and the prospect of examinations were at hand. There came languorous evenings. The precincts of his bedroom grew tiresome. April moved the lace curtains inside his open window. He got up from his desk and stretched himself and went straight to Freeman's, on Crandall Street, and asked if Lorna was at home. She was out, but was expected home soon, and he was invited to wait for her. Perhaps, Mrs. Freeman suggested, he would like to go up with the professor until she came back.

"Of course you know where to find him," she said, with a soft gesture toward the staircase. "Up in his study. Always, always studying, you know."

He thanked her and went up. He had been up once or twice before with Lorna, indulging in very deep talk. Moral philosophy, ethics, conceptions of history! Very pleasant occasions, to be sure, but equally as strange as Freeman himself. Now, to be alone with the head of the department! The study door was closed and he knocked.

"Come," called the professor.

As he entered he beheld the historian, lounging in a deep Morris chair before a grate fire, with an open book on his knees.

"Well, Mauney," he said pleasantly, as he rose. "Won't you sit down?"

Professor Robert Freeman was such a mite of a man that Mauney wondered how he had managed to brave the storm of life for fifty years. Whenever he saw him he felt like saying: "Well, professor, I expected, before seeing you again, to hear of your funeral. I expected you'd pick up a pneumonia germ somewhere and pass out."

Mauney would know him better later on, for the biological tragedy entailed in a struggle between germs and this frail body had been given as careful consideration by its owner as almost everything else, and, arguing that continued existence depended either on keeping up a strong physical resistance or else on avoiding germs altogether, Freeman chose to pursue the latter policy. His cunning brain saved him. He never rode on street cars. He avoided funerals, theatres and churches. "Germs? Why, don't get them. That's all!"

Freeman's long, thin face, with its grey eyes trained upon the world like vigilant sentinels, smiled perpetually. His nearly-bald pate sported a little patch of

thin, grey hair, parted carefully in the centre. But that smile! It was, in a sense, all of Freeman.

"What kind of smile, in reality, is it?" thought Mauney.

Never a happy smile, though at times it betokened delight. Never a suspicious smile, though it frequently indicated deep-buried fires of irony that could not be given full scope. Usually it was a polite, deferential grimace, that suggested Voltaire ever so slightly. So far from being repulsive, it put Mauney immediately at ease. Its social value was its hospitality, an almost pitying hospitality, as if the professor was pleased enough to have intercourse with others of the same biological species, seeing what a mess life was for all of them.

"That's exactly it," soliloquized Mauney. "That unpleasant, insuperable, unavoidable mess—human life. It's his stock-in-trade."

The man's erudition was profound. He had wracked his brains energetically on every department of thought, from religion to geology, and back again several dozens of times, looking for just one peep-hole of light and hope. The tragedy was that not one peep-hole had been found. Philosophy, logic, ethics, comparative theology, political economy, history of all kinds, literatures of all nationalities—he had dissected them all, pruned them all, reduced them all to their elemental fallacies, and there the matter stood.

"Mauney," he had said during one of their discussions, "you can't be sure of anything. You can prove nothing. Why? Simply because, in any conclusion at which you arrive, you can never be sure of your premises."

Just why the uncertainty of one's premises should so rob life of its many enthusiasms, Mauney could not understand. At heart he never enjoyed talking with Freeman, for, although he admired his adroit intellect, the professor always left him temporarily transfixed on the horns of a logical dilemma, or else temporarily treed by a savage, snarling premise. But as a mental exercise it was great fun, and its depressing effects yielded to fresh air as an antidote.

At any rate Robert Freeman was a great man. His opinion on historical questions was a high court of appeal. His monumental work on the constitutional history of France was on the shelf of every self-respecting library in the country. It was an honor to have access to the great man's home. "Freeman on Constitutional History" was a familiar marginal reference in text books. Freeman, alone in his library, with a big pipe and a huge, red can of tobacco beside him on the table, was a privilege. With almost reverent eyes Mauney looked upon the man who held the chair of history in the renowned University of Merlton—Merlton, that light set upon the summit of the world for the world's illumination, that arch-planter of wisdom's germs, that spring of the river of knowledge. And Freeman, that inextinguishable flame, whose brilliant radiance shone abroad—here he sat, smiling, smoking, conversing.

"I hope I'm not taking your time, Professor," he apologized.

"No, I'm just reading a light thing," he said, indicating his book. "You know I read everything, Mauney. I'm like a butterfly—taking a little honey from this flower and a little from that!" His long fingers turned

lightly through the pages. Mauney observed them—those long fingers, those restless hands of Freeman's, those long, thin hands like a woman's, that were always twining themselves about some object. If they were ever still it must have been during sleep, but even then Mauney could more easily fancy them moving sinuously about the folds of his counterpane. They were like his mind. If they held a book before his eyes they kept feeling the covers, as if his brain, in its intent of complete mastery, took cognizance even of the texture of the binding.

"And I find," continued Freeman, "that it's wise to read light, little things like this. You know, enjoyment is everything."

"But is it?" ventured Mauney, consciously drifting into the familiar channel of their arguments. "Is enjoyment really everything?"

Freeman's face became delicately ethereal as he considered the question.

"I think so," he said softly. "But if you are in any doubt, please begin by stating your own opinion, will you not?"

For a moment Mauney smoked in silence, reminded of Socrates.

"Yes," he consented. "Now I think that enjoyment is comparatively incidental. A man has a duty to perform in the world, and he must perform it whether he enjoys doing so or not?"

"All right, Mauney," smiled Freeman. "But won't you admit that the motive that empowers you to perform your duty is the prospect of future enjoyment in seeing your task completed?"

"That, professor, is equivalent to saying that all effort is inspired by the hope of getting a thrill."

"Well, isn't it true? We are selfish at all times. We want the thrill. I don't care where you take it. It's the same principle everywhere. Socrates drank hemlock because it thrilled him to think he was abiding by the legal decision of his country. And even of Jesus Christ it is written: 'For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross.'"

This last example came as a jolt to Mauney's being. His thoughts drifted. There was a long pause before they resumed conversation. For an hour they continued. To whatever argument they turned—and they turned to several—Mauney felt that, while he was consistently defeated in a superficial sense, he was victorious in a deeper sense that Freeman could not, or would not, grasp. As in their previous conversations, they eventually arrived at the blind, stone wall of nullity, where Freeman's declared position was one of absolute mental helplessness, and Mauney's one of undeclared boredom and impatience.

When at last he heard Lorna playing downstairs, he rose and took leave of the professor.

Why had he come so eagerly to-night? The question forced him to pause on the lower steps of the staircase. In the drawing-room he saw her seated by the piano. The riddle of his attraction faded out of his thoughts as he leaned on the banister to watch and listen. She was absorbed in the skilful rendering of a scale-infested classic. Although her hands, like racing elves, flew with dexterous speed upon the ivory keys, her body was reposefully still, her chin slightly lifted, her eyes viewing the performance like impartial critics.

When she finished, quite unconscious of Mauney's presence, and picked up her kerchief from the music holder to rub her hands, he remained on the steps spell-bound with admiration. Then she turned her head and, as she saw him, rose gracefully, but with much coloring of her face.

"I didn't want to interrupt," he explained, as he came near her. "What is that?"

She told him the name of the selection.

"It's quite difficult, Mauney. Not very entertaining, either. I fear it will be some time before I venture to exhibit it." She looked up with a serious, accusing glance. "You took a very unfair advantage of me, didn't you?"

"How, Lorna?" he asked in surprise.

Then he realized what she meant. Queer frankness! Queer bashfulness! Did she ever think anything without saying it? Did she ever withhold a criticism?

"Why, no," he said, "I—I didn't mean to be—rude, you know. Aren't you a strange girl?"

"What will I play for you?" she asked, turning through some sheets of music. "Do you like this?"

She held up Nevin's "Day in Venice."

"Um—h'm," he nodded. "That's wonderful!" He had never heard it in his life. He was looking into her blue eyes above the sheet of music. "Don't you think so, Lorna?"

"What are you staring at?"

"Was I staring? Forgive me."

As she began the piece he lounged in a chair near by. Nevin's dream, in all its pretty moods, all its imagery! He half-listened. He wanted to think.

The Freeman home was growing comfortable. All

its members were, no doubt, off the beaten path. Mauney felt a commendation in their very originality. If the professor chose to spend his time in the desultory travail of mental investigations, was not his occupation as justifiable as the time-wasting hobbies of most men? If Mrs. Freeman wished to limit her mind, as she apparently did, to devotional pursuits, was this any more to be criticized than the asininity of bridge-parties and the hypocritical commitments of woman's average social life? And if, finally, Lorna chose to be so uncomfortably frank as to inform him how little she relished eaves-dropping over a banister, was her frankness not, in reality, part of a truthful, clean-cut personality, that admitted no deception? The home was growing comfortable.

But he did not know what he wanted to say to Lorna. Their conversation roamed aimlessly and pleasantly along accustomed paths. He found himself admiring her queenly face and groping for words. After an hour the professor's soft step was heard on the stairs. He came in, to find them sitting in separate chairs, five feet apart. He smiled and glanced from one to the other.

"Well, people," he said, in his quiet voice, "what is the big topic of discussion to-night?"

"We haven't struck one yet, sir," Mauney replied. "We've been avoiding controversial subjects."

"Would you like some tea?" Freeman asked.

This was the historian's failing—tea at night, hot, weak and in quantities, before he retired to the midnight vigil of his more serious study. Lorna led the way to the dining-room and made it. Holding their cups and saucers they stood talking about art for art's sake. This was introduced by a still-life group in oils, hung

over the sideboard, and completed, at length, by an appeal to the professor, who stated that, without any shadow of doubt, art had no higher aim than art. But while he talked he looked from one to the other, as if, in the undercurrents of his brain, he was attempting to decide how intimate a relationship existed between them, and as if, so Mauney felt, he himself would be the greatest obstacle to any suitor for his daughter's hand.

Later Lorna bade Mauney good-night in the vestibule, between the hall-door and the street-door. Some sense of being closeted from the world stole upon him and with it a desire to take Lorna passionately in his arms. With an effort he checked the impulse.

"Lorna," he said, "do you know that I nearly kissed you. What would you have done?" He still held her hand.

"I suppose I should have shivered and been angry!" she replied, simply.

"Then," he said, giving her hand a little pat, "aren't you glad I didn't?"

"Naturally."

From her complacent tone he might have been asking the question, "Do you prefer wealth to poverty?"

CHAPTER V.

DINNER AT THE DE FREVILLE'S.

*"Her voice, whate'er she said, enchanted;
Like music to the heart it went.
And her dark eyes—how eloquent!
As what they would 'twas granted."*—Samuel
Rogers Jacqueline.

Mauney soon realized that, unsatisfactory as was the progress of his affair with Lorna Freeman, he was gaining some advantages from his connection with the family. . Life was now a very different thing from that of Lantern Marsh farm. He had at last arrived into the midst of education. He had found people who knew things and were willing to teach him out of their knowledge. Moreover, he could discern that he was being gradually adopted by the Freemans. Through their influence he received an invitation to a dinner at the home of François de Freville. It was written in French. It was to be, for him, a most unusual pleasure and a very exciting one. He had a tailor measure him for a dinner-jacket suit. Lorna fell in love with it, when she saw it, on the evening of the function at de Freville's. They met at Freeman's and walked up Crandall Street behind the professor and his wife.

François de Freville, the popular professor of French, always entertained charmingly. He could not do it in any other way. This was a "Faculty dinner," all the guests being members of the university staff,

with a few exceptions, as in Mauney's case. As a matter of fact it was a rare privilege to be invited and to meet personally the brilliant men who, on such an occasion, put off the garments of their wonted academic restraint, to indulge in free, good-fellowship. François himself lent a distinctly exotic atmosphere. With delightful informality he stood butler inside his own street door, and roared greetings to the guests as they arrived. He was a giant who must bow his head on entering doorways to avoid striking his skull—a man of unusual stature, big-bodied, big-handed, big-headed. Perhaps the charm of being received tempestuously by François lay in the ludicrous idea that this herculean host need not necessarily receive anyone, for if a party of armed militia presented themselves demanding reception they would certainly never get in. François, standing with his big, red face, his enormous black eye-brows, his enormous smile, that burst forth from lairs of brows and black moustaches, would hurl back invasion with smiling ease. In every detail of appearance he suggested the strong-sinewed "kicker-out" of the continental restaurant—just as brusque, just as impulsive, just as toweringly imposing. It was his perversion of function that titillated the fancy, for he was welcoming his guests. One by one he received them, with a fitting word for each, a word of liberty, in fact, which only François would be permitted, of all men, to speak.

"Ah! Madame Freeman!" he took her hand, as she entered, between his own enormous hands to pet it. "Vous êtes très charmante ce soir!"

Mrs. Freeman was not charming to-night. She was never charming, being always too instinct with the soft,

great mystery of her personal tragedy. That, however, was quite immaterial. Even if, after thirty years of married life, only dim relics of charm had survived, there was still a truant delight in being told this falsehood. Mauney saw her warm to the salutation of François, and manage to get past his great bulk in excellent spirits.

"Ah, M'sieur le Professeur!" bellowed the giant as he greeted Freeman. What a contrast the two men formed! Freeman smiled apprehensively at the pile of vibrant life before him, as if dreading the forthcoming *bon mot*.

"Le grand homme, mes amis," François vociferously announced to a cluster of guests in the drawing-room. "Le grand homme est arrivé!"

The laughter which greeted this announcement was restrained because, apparently, the guests felt that Freeman actually was a great man.

"Bon soir, Mam'selle," to Lorna.

"Bon soir, M'sieur Bard. Vous êtes bienvenue."

The host still stood at his post, when Mauney wandered, a few minutes later, through the hallway, and beheld him welcoming a new arrival. Mauney was impressed with the new arrival's appearance. A woman of perhaps twenty-two, and of bewitching beauty, she stood, her hand still grasped by the Frenchman and laughing at his words.

"Bon soir, bon soir, Oiseau!" burst forth François and bent to kiss her hand with perfect gallantry. "Bienvenue, ma petite Oiseau, la maison est à toi!"

Mauney wondered at the nickname. Perhaps her movements, her manner, as lightsome as a bird's, had suggested it, or perhaps the plaintive alto note of her

voice made François think—as it did Mauney—of tree-tops on summer evenings. She stood for a moment looking up with admiration into her host's eyes.

"I don't know the French for it," she laughed, "but if your house is Oiseau's it's a roost, isn't it?"

Thereat de Freville roared, and, holding his sides, watched Oiseau's neat ankles (as did Mauney also) while she climbed the staircase to remove her cloak.

While the guests waited for dinner, they talked in several groups about the hall and the tastefully arranged drawing-room. De Freville found Mauney standing alone and introduced him to "Oiseau." Mauney had difficulty understanding the Professor's French, his only admitted language, but managed to draw from his explosive encomium, that Miss MacDowell was in some way or other an exceptional person in the University of Merlton. When François left them she laughed with amusement, turning from his hulk of a figure to her new acquaintance.

"Have you known the professor long, Mr. Bard?" she asked.

"Just met him to-night. A good sort, isn't he?"

"Oh, remarkable," she said. "His robust voice always makes me think of somebody yelling into an empty rain barrel."

Miss MacDowell was a decided brunette, with very beautiful dark brown eyes that permitted themselves to be looked into. Mauney at once felt depth after depth revealing themselves as he looked—comforting eyes, that seemed as much alive as the rest of her oval face. She gained strength from her arched nose, and tenderness from her delicate lips. Her upper lip drew up at times, exposing a white gleam of teeth. There was an

unusual sympathy about her upper lip. It drew up with delicate quiverings as if attuning itself to catch his mood. Her black hair and brows, together with her youthful color, completed the outward appearance of a woman in whom he became immediately interested.

"Do you attend the university?" he ventured.

"Yes. It's a habit," she laughed. "Three years of it."

"What line are you especially interested in, Miss MacDowell?"

"None, Mr. Bard. I didn't come to college to get an education."

"Indeed! Why, then, did you come, may I ask?"

"Oh, just to get enough highbrow information so that I would know what highbrows were talking about." She said this quite seriously, with a note of unexpected bitterness in her voice. "If there's one cruel advantage one person ever takes of another it's to talk about something of which the other person knows nothing. If I hadn't come to the university, then, no matter where I went, any girl who had waded through Horace, or physics, or solid geometry, could make me shrivel into insignificance by mentioning 'O fons Bandusiæ,' or Boyle's law or conic sections. As it stands now I know a Latin poem by its sound. I know that a law in physics isn't essential to individual happiness, and that conic sections (so far as I'm concerned) are nothing but an inconsiderate imposition."

Mauney laughed and drew up a couple of chairs.

"Now, for argument's sake," he said, when they were seated—"mathematics is great. It's wonderful to know that there is an eternal principle of fitness governing problems of numbers."

"It may be wonderful enough," she conceded, leaning over the arm of her chair, "but to dwell on it would take the pastoral quality clean out of life for me. I'm lacking in appreciation of such marvels. I'm interested in folks—just folks. I want to know how they feel. I want to understand folks."

Mauney was somewhat put to it to gauge the strong individualistic note in Miss MacDowell, but was determined to try still harder.

"Do you believe in woman suffrage?" he ventured.

She shook her head.

"Surely," he said, "you believe in women's rights."

"Certainly not," replied Miss MacDowell, calmly. "We are the weaker sex. God made us weak on purpose."

"Never!" argued Mauney, although he liked her attitude. "That's an old bogey that got a fatal foothold in antediluvian days, and it's taken about fifty centuries to get the idea even questioned. Ask any woman. She'll tell you that the greatest movement of the twentieth century is the emancipation of women!"

"Tell me," she said, pointedly, "from what do women seek to be emancipated?"

"Why! from an inferior rating. Woman's intelligence and her equality demand a better label than man's helpmeet."

She cast a shrewd glance at Mauney, as if doubting his sincerity.

"Aren't you a bit of a bluffer?" she asked. "Well, listen; you're off the track. Woman's inherent weakness is the very secret of her strength. Take any man, no matter how stubbornly masculine, and there's a

woman somewhere who can just simply make or mar him."

"Do you think so?" queried Mauney, looking more deeply into her pretty, dark eyes.

"Well, if you don't believe me, open your eyes and look at life!"

Mauney enjoyed her mild exasperation and determined to extract her viewpoint still further. There was as yet no sign of dinner, and the score of guests still kept up a monotonous buzz of conversation. He noticed Lorna talking with Mr. Nutbrown Hennigar, a lecturer in the history department.

"Don't you think men are irrational beings, Miss MacDowell?" he said, turning his chair a little toward her.

"What difference does that make?"

"You might have more respect for them if they weren't!"

"Respect men!" she laughed. "Why I think they're just wonderful. I just love men. But, tell me, Mr. Bard, what are you taking at the university?"

"History."

"Like it?"

"Yes, I do. What are you taking?"

"General course."

"Like it?"

"Oh, please don't ask me!" she implored, playfully putting up her slender hands in mock impatience. "The college game never quite phizzed on me, I'm afraid. I'm tired of it. May as well tell the truth, as lie about it, eh?"

"Surely. But what is it you dislike about education?"

"Education's all right. It's the university. Some

day I'm going to write a book on how to run one's university—just like a hand-guide on how to run one's automobile. I'll send you a copy, if I don't forget."

"Please don't. I imagine it would be hot stuff."

"Thanks. I take that as a compliment, whether it is or not." She laughed as she turned toward the other guests. "There's Nutbrown Hennigar over yonder talking with Lorna Freeman. He'd murder me if he heard me talk about college this way. You know him of course. Funny chap. Likeable in many ways. And he's certainly in the swim."

"Swim—how?"

"Why! His father owns the university—Senator Hennigar, yonder, talking with Madame de Freville. He looks like cupid at seventy, minus the wings."

"He's the Chancellor, isn't he?" Mauney asked. "I'm just a green-horn in Merlton. I'm afraid of my shadow at an affair like this."

"Chancellor—yes—and then some! You certainly are green if you don't know all about the Hennigars. However, you'll learn, Mr. Bard. Hennigar is the great password. You can do anything if you have a little bit of Hennigar. There's Nutbrown, for example, lecturing in history. Someday he'll be the professor. There's Professor Freeman, married to Hennigar's daughter."

"No," said Mauney, suddenly sitting up in astonishment.

"But, yes," quoth Miss MacDowell in surprise. "Didn't you know that?"

"I certainly did not."

"Well, how much will I tell you? Who are your friends here?"

"The Freemans."

"That's too bad," she sighed playfully. "My tongue will get me in wrong, sooner or later."

"Not at all. Shoot ahead. I'm very keen on what you're telling me."

"In that case I'll continue. Professor Freeman is a brilliant man, but, without a little bit of Hennigar, his brilliance would have been doomed to obscurity like the jewel in the cave. He started life as poor as a church mouse, but saw help in two directions. I know him like a book. He got a job as lecturer in history. He stuck to business and avoided individualistic tendencies. I give him great credit. He knew that since the days when Socrates held tutorial groups in porches down to the present when he held his own in university halls, a fair volume of knowledge had been amassed—quite enough historical data to engage anyone comfortably. He had opinions of his own, but ascension on the academic ladder meant consistent self-suppression. He quietly taught the young idea old ideas, and rose in favor, until, gradually passing through assistant-ships and associate-ships, he stretched out finally in the chair of history. But, of course, the magic behind it all was his connection with the Hennigar family. You see, the senator is Chancellor, chairman of the building committee, friend of the university in general, and heaviest endower in particular. If Freeman could have done a cleverer thing than marry Miss Hennigar, it would have required a committee of corporation lawyers to discover it."

"That's news to me," said Mauney. "I appreciate getting in on a little gossip like this, too. Who's your friend here, Miss MacDowell?"

"I haven't any," she said. "Nutbrown Hennigar fusses over me at times. But I'm here just because François met me in the east corridor this morning and told me I had to come up for dinner. I never made any bids for getting in with this crowd. I don't fit, anyway. But François insisted, and then Madame 'phoned me, so what could I do?"

"They seem like a friendly bunch of people, though," Mauney remarked.

"Friendly!" she returned. "Why not? They're pretty nearly all related. There is Alfred Tanner—he's a real fellow—but he married Senator Hennigar's other daughter. Everybody else here, if not related to Hennigar, has a very special stand in. It's the great eternal family compact. I'll mention that in my handbook, too."

"But the senator seems to be a good old chap!"

"Certainly. I admire him. You know how he made all his money, don't you?"

"No."

"Jam," said Miss MacDowell simply. It was apparent from her animation that she loved talking about the man. Mauney wondered at her, nevertheless, for it struck him that she was ill-advised to say so much to a stranger. Fortunately, everything she had said, thus far, had struck home with unusual force and greatly appealed to him. But how could she take the risk of committing herself so freely?

"You see, it's just like this," she said, lowering her voice and smiling with the mischievous glee of a child consciously undertaking some deviltry, "Hennigar discovered early in life that plums and ginger-root blend in a manner most gratifying to the palate. He per-

severed with his formula. With the austere self-denial of the specialist, he worked hard and became the arch-confectioner. He pyramided profits into advertising—”

“Is he the maker of Hennigar’s jam?” interrupted Mauney, incredulously.

“Of course he is. He kept at it, as I was saying, until to-day a ten-acre factory buzzes with its manufacture and the plum-trees on a thousand hills grow for Hennigar alone. Oh, but it was wonderful jam,” she laughed, smacking her lips prettily. “It has ‘jammed’ out a small-sized marble palace in Riverton, a fleet of motor cars from Rolls to Buick, one for every mood, an army of liveried servants, one for every duty. It has ‘jammed’ Elias Hennigar into the Senate, into the front ranks of the Church, into the intimate counsels of the university—in fact, this jam has made him. But, of course, one doesn’t mention jam, now. He’s got it all washed off his hands by this time.”

“Doesn’t that beat the devil!” exclaimed Mauney. “Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss MacDowell.”

“Not at all,” she laughed. “I like to hear a man cuss. I sort of know where he stands, then. Listen and I’ll tell you a secret.”

Mauney leaned a little nearer her.

“I’m going to drop my course this spring,” she whispered, “and take a job under Professor Freeman as departmental secretary in history. “Won’t that be fun? I’ll have Alfred Tanner to work with. He’s better than a circus any time, and then there’s Nutbrown Hennigar. Have you had him to lecture to you yet? No? I guess he sticks to the general course students. Well, he’s a scream, anyway. He’s very, very fond of me, mind you. Just imagine a Hennigar on my trail. He

takes me to theatres often. And dances—oh, he can't dance at all; he just rambles. He thinks it's awfully queer of me to have accepted this job in the history department."

Mauney's attention was completely engaged by his charming companion. She puzzled him beyond measure. Why, he wondered, did she talk so confidently to him? She did not appear to be a rattle-brained woman, and yet how strangely familiar she had become.

"Say," he said, after a little pause. "You're kind of human, and I'm just going to ask you a question, if I may."

She nodded.

"Why do you tell me so much?" he asked. "Mind you, I like it a whole lot. But how did you know I would like it?"

She laughed tantalizingly.

"Because I know all about you, Mr. Bard," she replied.

"Me?"

"Certainly. You're a pal of Max Lee's, aren't you?"

His eyes opened with enlightenment.

"Are you Freda MacDowell?" he asked eagerly.

She nodded and teased him with her eyes.

"Of course I am. Max has told me all about you. When I heard the name Bard, to-night, I wondered if you were Mauney."

"I sure am," he said, warming up, "and this is a great pleasure, indeed, I—"

"And I was positive it was you," she interrupted, with a roguish glance at his face, "because Max told me you had an awful head of red hair."

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH STALTON SEES THE DOCTOR.

MAUNEY did not enjoy the dinner-party. He kept looking at Freda MacDowell and wishing he had never met her. He knew, without further contemplation, that she was the most attractive woman he had ever met. He could have gone on talking to her all evening long, but he was glad that such had been impossible. Every time he looked at her he felt a warmth gripping his breast. Her eyes—well, he knew that he had never seen eyes like them. They were perfect. They were vastly comforting. They haunted him, all the way back to Freeman's, and then all the way to 73 Franklyn Street. He remembered Max's description of her, and knew that it was no idle remark: "She's just like nobody else."

He demanded of life to know just how such a thing could come to pass, namely, that he should be attracted so strongly to a woman, all at once, at first sight, at first talk. Of course he would have to put her clean out of his mind. He felt weak when he thought of her. He knew just how much of her he could stand. He was positive that another hour's acquaintance would have completed the most enthralling fascination. He sat in his own room smoking furiously, trying to accuse himself of a hyper-vivid imagination and an over-developed susceptibility. He tried to tell himself that he

was not infatuated with her. He smoked many cigarettes. It grew late. He pulled down a book and began reading, with the book in his lap. Then he came to himself gradually and discovered that he had not been reading at all, but only inspecting his finger-nails, while his thoughts kept returning constantly to Freda MacDowell.

Max would wonder why he had not dropped in to-night. Somehow he could not face Max. He had no wish to see Max to-night. It would be hard to talk to him—just as if he had wronged him in some way. Then, at length, he gained a better perspective of the situation. He tossed aside his book and walked along the hall to his chum's door.

"Hello, you!" said Lee, looking up from his desk, which was littered with note-books and texts. "You've been dolling up a little, eh? Been at a dance?"

"No, just a kind of dinner party, Max. What are you doing?"

"Can't you see?"

"Sure. What is it, though?"

"Oto-laryngology, if you insist."

"Is it?" asked Mauney, absently, as he leaned against the wall by the door.

"Well, of course, you fish. If I say it's oto-laryngology I don't mean anything else. What's the matter with you? Sit down. I'm out of smokes. If you've got any, hand 'em over."

Mauney tossed his package of cigarettes on the desk and stretched himself in a chair near by.

"Well, Max, he said at length. "You're the luckiest dog in Merlton!"

"How do you make that out, my son?" Lee asked, as he turned to throw away a burnt match.

"Because you are, that's all. You've got a woman who really loves you, and—"

"Wait, now, you poor fish. Did I tell you she loved me?"

"Well, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't."

Lee cast a puzzled look at Mauney, who sat, as if in reverie, gazing up through blue rings of smoke that emerged in slow clouds from his mouth.

"Are you suddenly overtaken with a bachelor's remorse?" Max queried, sarcastically. "Is that why you come in here to disturb my faithful studies? Why envy me so much? Why don't you nab onto somebody yourself? You've got more to recommend you than I have."

Mauney was not listening to him, but continued gazing up at the ceiling. Even there he could not avoid the vision of a woman's dark, comforting eyes.

"You've got better mating points than I have. You're a better man than I am, *Gunga-din*. Look at that chest of yours—any woman would sigh petulantly to have her head pillowed there. All you got to do is to go out and walk down Tower Street and the girls will be running into lamp-posts as they turn to behold your Apollo-like form."

Mauney looked into Max's face, confused.

"What?" he asked.

"Oh I didn't say anything. I was just humming a snatch from Mendelssohn's 'Fatal Step.' Say, Mauney, what the devil's the matter with you, anyhow?"

"Nothing."

"All right: smoke on. I'm going to study. Stay till you get it all straightened out, and, when you're ready to go, don't forget the door is on your left. Good-night, dearie."

Lee turned to his desk and resumed his reading of numerous pages of badly-written notes. From time to time he mumbled sentences, then shifted in his chair, then lit a new cigarette, and mumbled again. During this time Mauney sat quietly back, busy with unpleasant thoughts. He remembered that Lee had explained the hopelessness of his relationship with Freda MacDowell. He had said that, although he loved her, he would never let her know. Mauney had always admired Max. Now he respected him more than ever. He thought it was very noble of him to preserve silence regarding his love.

"I guess we're both sort of out in the cold, Max," he said, at length.

"I guess so," Lee absent-mindedly agreed, as he continued to read. "Out in the cold? How do you mean?"

"With women."

"Oh, damn women. I'm busy with oto-laryngology. Exam's coming on to-morrow."

Mauney rose and stretched himself.

"I'm going to bed," he announced, tossing his package of cigarettes again on the table. "Keep 'em; you'll need a few fags before morning."

Mauney resumed his accustomed life next day with a feeling of gratitude that he had at least his work to occupy his mind. He put Freda MacDowell out of his consciousness—she was the property of Maxwell Lee, and nothing would ever permit him to encroach on his good friend's property. She grew smaller as she re-

ceded in the vista of his thoughts, and he considered it fortunate that he saw nothing more of her during the term.

At the spring examinations Lorna Freeman gained top place, defeating Mauney by many marks and winning the Hennigar scholarship for proficiency in history. He congratulated her cordially, and inwardly admitted her superior ability. She deserved the distinction. He was not jealous, for even at the end of his first year his eye was looking at something different from marks and scholarships. He had passed his exams—that was all he cared. There were other rewards—quiet, inner compensations, from the reading of history. These he had not missed. The story of humanity was growing real to him, something he could touch with his hands and cherish. There came thoughts that pleased his fancy, and he wrote them in a big, empty ledger—wonderful thoughts about history, that he wanted no one but himself to read. He prized his ledger. Many a night during the long summer vacation he took it from the locked drawer of his desk and added more paragraphs to it. It was nothing—just his fancies.

Maxwell Lee, having successfully graduated, and having acquired the degree of M.D., gained an appointment in the department of biochemistry, as a research fellow, at a salary of seven hundred dollars a year, and began work immediately. Mauney was introduced to his laboratory, a big upstairs room in the Medical Building, with two bald, great windows that flooded the place with a brilliant light. It was a busy room, filled with long tables of intricate apparatus, retorts, gas burners, and complicated arrangements of glass tubes,

resembling a child's conception of a factory. He often dropped in to talk with Lee, who was always absorbed in his new work, bent over steaming dishes of fluid, or seated before a delicate scales, contained in a glass case. He spoke seldom of Freda MacDowell, now, but much of a certain disease upon which he was working, in an attempt to discover its cause. Mauney disliked the laboratory, pungent with fumes of acid, but was glad to see Max so happy in his work.

Lee still remained at Mrs. Manton's boarding-house and in the evenings, when he was not busy at the Medical Building, was to be found, sitting in his shirt sleeves, in an alcove of the upstairs hallway, reading technical treatises on biochemistry.

Fred Stalton gradually formed his own original opinion about the intense occupation of Lee.

"Since he got that M.D. tacked on to his name," Stalton remarked to Mauney one night in the dining-room, "he's sort of waded out into biochemistry a little too deep. Max has changed, Mauney. He's changed a lot. When he first came here to stay, he was the life of the party, a real midnight serenader, believe me. Of course, I suppose somebody's got to do the tall studying, but I hate to see him so much at it. His health won't stand it. He's not very strong. He ought to rig up an office down on College Street, hang out his shingle and practise. Why, if he just had the lucre I've spent on doctors he could take a holiday in Honolulu. People would be bound to come to him. Doctors don't do any good except to ease your mind a little, and that's why people go to them. You get a pain in your almanack, and you hike right over to the nearest medico. He just lays on the hands, tells you it's a very minor

trouble; you pay him a couple of bones for a piece of paper and go home tickled all over. It's a game, but Max ought to play it. He's getting too serious."

"Maybe," admitted Mauney. "But he's all taken up with the idea of striking the cause of pernicious anæmia —"

"Anæmia?"

"Yes."

"What's that like?"

"Oh, I couldn't tell you. Max did describe it to me. People with it are sort of pale and yellow and lose their pep."

Stalton's brow puckered up thoughtfully.

"I wonder if there's any chance of me having that lot," he said slowly. "I certainly haven't got any more pep than a Ford car leaking in oil in three cylinders. Here I am, Mauney, only forty-two years old; I shouldn't be like this. I can't do much more work than a sundial on a rainy day, without getting all in, down and out. I've been to about a hundred doctors and only two ever agreed on what ails me."

"What seems to be the trouble, Fred?"

"All I know is how I feel," replied Stalton. "Some say it's hyperacidity. Some call it auto-intoxication. One bird claimed I had an ulcer of the stomach. About ten of 'em laid all the blame on my teeth. Others said I had weakness of the nerve centres. I don't believe any of them ever really hit it yet. As soon as I collect enough dust I'm going to call and see Adamson."

"Is he good?" asked Mauney, but casually interested in Stalton's recital of his bodily woes.

"Good? I guess he is! That chap, they say, never makes a mistake. He's a professor in the Medical

School. You have to make an appointment four weeks in advance to see him at all. He charges about a hundred a minute, but, from what I hear, he's worth it. I'd never begrudge it to him. I haven't been able to hold down a steady job for five years."

Mauney had observed Stalton's manner of life. Gertrude allowed him to play on an easy financial margin. He made what money he got by speculating on theatre tickets, playing the horses at Riverton Park, and from his rare, but always successful, indulgence in big poker games down-town. When he was in pocket he paid his board cheerfully and bought new clothes and quantities of cigarettes. When he was financially embarrassed he helped Gertrude with the housework and made his own cigarettes. He was the soul of good-heartedness. He would lend money to any of his friends if he had it. If not, he would thank the intending borrower for the compliment of being asked. His popularity at 73 Franklyn Street always remained at flood-tide—he was so cheerful about his own infirmities and so eager to listen to the troubles of others. Mauney found him as restful as other men who lived purposeless lives.

Late one night Mauney was awakened by the sound of his bedroom door opening. In the light which entered from the hall he beheld Stalton standing in his bathrobe, smoking a cigarette. He was unusually pale.

"I didn't want to disturb, Max," he said, "but I'm suffering the tortures of the damned with this stomach of mine. I wonder if you would mind going downstairs and calling up Dr. Adamson. I've got to see that bird, sooner or later, and I'd like to have him see me when this real attack is on."

Mauney agreed, sprang out of bed, and feeling that

Stalton was actually in great pain, persuaded him to take his own bed. After helping him to get into it, he covered him quickly with the sheets and descended to the telephone. After giving the number he waited for fully a minute before receiving a reply.

"Yes," said a tired, business-like voice at length.

"Doctor Adamson?"

"Yes."

"Could you come to seventy-three Franklin Street?"

"What appears wrong?" he asked pleasantly.

"Mr. Stalton has a severe pain in his stomach."

"Oh, that's unfortunate," he replied. "It might be a surgical case, you know. Anyway I never go out at night, except under very exceptional circumstances. I think you had better call my assistant, Dr. Turner."

"Well, listen, doctor," persisted Mauney, "Mr. Stalton is a fine chap and he thinks the sun rises and sets on you."

The physician laughed.

"Indeed? Well, that's very nice of him," he said.

"Tell him I'll break a custom. Seventy-three Franklin? I'll be up soon."

Within half an hour the distinguished physician arrived. He was a cheerful, clean-shaven, well-dressed man of perhaps forty-five, and looked extremely awake, considering the hour. Mauney showed him upstairs to his room and introduced him to the patient.

"How do you do?" said Dr. Adamson, pleasantly, as he took Stalton's proffered hand. "Are you in trouble?"

"I feel as if there was a mud-turtle inside my stomach, doctor, trying to land on the edge of my liver," confessed Stalton.

Adamson laughed as he drew up a chair, and sat down leisurely beside the bed.

"Well," he said, in his cheerful way, "your description lacks nothing in vividness. Do you think he will manage to land?"

Stalton put his palm over the pit of his stomach.

"Right there," he said.

"Pain?" queried Adamson.

"It isn't exactly pain, doctor. It's an all-gone feeling. If it would only pain I'd know where I stood. But it really doesn't pain—it's just sort of churning."

Adamson's grey eyes became keen, as he inspected his patient.

"When did you first notice it?" he asked.

"I've had it for ten years; only it's got unbearable to-night."

"Exactly," nodded the physician, as he lapsed into a silence, and felt his patient's pulse.

"Are you a student?" he asked, glancing about the room.

"No. This is Mr. Bard's room. I haven't followed any regular occupation for a few years back."

"Why?"

"I don't seem to have the pep, doctor."

"Exactly. Do you have headaches?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Right in the dome," explained Stalton, placing his hand on the top of his head.

"Exactly. Any backache?"

"You're right."

"Where?"

"All the way from my neck to my heels. My legs ache most of the time, too."

After the physician had very carefully examined him he dropped his stethoscope into his bag, which he closed with a snap.

"What horse is going to get the Lofton Plate to-morrow?" he asked, as he sat down and lit a cigarette and proffered the case to his patient.

"I'd bet on the Grundy stables to-morrow, doctor."

"You think so?"

"Sure. I don't pose as an expert, but if I had the money I'd play Grundy to win for a thousand dollars."

"I used to imagine I could pick the winners," laughed Adamson. "I think every man passes through that stage."

"Yes, and the sooner he passes it the better," smiled Stalton.

"Exactly."

For a few seconds the physician smoked in silence.

"What's the matter with me, doctor?" asked Stalton, at length.

"Are you prepared for my verdict?" replied Adamson, somewhat seriously.

"Well—yes—that's why I sent for you. I know you will tell me."

"No matter how serious, I presume you would rather know the truth?"

"You bet I would," said Stalton, perching himself up on his elbow, and gazing with fearful apprehension at the renowned physician. "Some doctors said there wasn't anything wrong with me."

"But there is," said Adamson, emphatically.

"Well, I knew it, I—"

"You have a really serious complaint, Mr. Stalton."

"Is there any hope of curing it?"

"That all depends on you, Mr. Stalton. But first let me explain. And in doing so I want you to believe every word I say. I don't want you to be hurt by anything I say, either. I have given you a careful examination and have located your trouble, but it's not the kind of trouble you think it is."

"No?"

"No. Your stomach is anatomically normal, although it is not working in perfect physiological harmony. It is influenced by your mind very considerably. Your head contains a real ache, and your back contains a real ache, and your legs get really tired. You feel weak most of the time. You find it hard to stick at one occupation. These are real troubles, not imaginary. Your body is—well, rather rebellious against work. Is that not true?"

"It certainly is, doctor. I—"

"Exactly. It doesn't want to be put to a test, where it knows it will be unsuccessful."

"You've sure expressed it, doctor."

"And now, Mr. Stalton," said Adamson, leaning back in his chair and fixing his patient with his keen, grey eyes, "would you believe me if I told you that your body is merely working in harmony with a wrong idea in your mind?"

"Well, I'd believe anything you say, doctor," said Stalton, slowly, but with evident surprise.

"Good. I appreciate your confidence very much. You have a wrong thought complex. In some way or other you have acquired a wrong mental attitude toward work. It's not your fault. I do not blame you in the

least. But I want to remove that thought complex, because in so doing I will remove your disease, and if you will but believe me now, you will be immediately cured. You have for the past few years actually feared work."

"I know it, doctor, but I—"

"This fear of work has been a real disease, Mr. Stalton. You feared work. You mentally rebelled against work. Your body took its cue from your mind and rebelled also. Your body rebelled so much that it instituted pains and aches, so as to avoid the thing your brain feared. In other words, your whole trouble has been a mental and physical rebellion against work. Do you believe me or not?"

"Well, doctor, I've got to believe you," said Stalton slowly. "But what am I to do?"

"First, you are going to remind yourself that work is really a blessing—nothing to be feared—but rather something to be desired. It will not hurt you. I give my word. You need not have this old timidity any longer. In the second place, you are going to get a job somewhere at once and begin to work steadily at it. Have you any trade?"

"I learned electric wiring years ago."

"Fine. Go to-morrow, confidently, and get a job, wiring. If you do, you will find all your pains and aches gradually disappearing. If I am wrong, I will charge you nothing for this call. I know I'm right."

"How much do I owe you, doctor?" asked Stalton, getting out of bed, as the physician started toward the door.

"It will be twenty-five dollars," he replied. "But

I would like it to be the next twenty-five you earn. Good-night."

He extended his hand.

"Good-night, sir," said Stalton, taking it. "I believe you've hit the nail on the head."

When Mauney returned to his room, after accompanying Adamson to the door, he found Fred Stalton walking up and down.

"What do you know about that, Mauney?" he asked. "That bird certainly put his finger on the tender spot that time. In one way I feel like a damned slacker now. Don't mention this to anybody, Mauney. But Adamson is right. Why, that pain is gone already. I'm a liar if it isn't. No drugs about that bird. I'm going out to-morrow to buck the old world for a living again."

A few weeks saw a great change in Stalton. He embraced work with a good will and never once faltered. He obtained a good position with a down-town electrical company, and came home each night hungry and happy. Gertrude was puzzled completely. ,

"Why, Freddie!" she said one night, "you're all better. What on earth did it? You look ten years younger, and I haven't heard a word about teeth for a long time."

"Do you remember that last bottle of Burton's Bitter Tonic I punished?" he asked with a broad smile. "Well, it's the greatest stuff on record. I'm going to pose for a portrait and give 'em a red-hot personal letter of recommendation to put in the newspaper. 'It has cured me—why not others? Eventually—why not now? At all druggists, the same wonderful, world-beating, little tonic!'"

BOOK III.

THE LAMP OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER I.

ADJUSTMENTS.

The next two years passed very quickly for Mauney, with few perceptible changes. The war was over. Merlton, one day, had gone crazy with armistice celebration, only to settle down on the next to its usual life. The university was crowded now with returned soldiers. It was a familiar scene to behold the great square dotted with limping students still in uniform. The sight of them brought sharp emotions to Mauney—mingled sympathy for their sufferings and regret that he had been denied a share in their adventures in France. He knew that he, himself, had been peculiarly untouched by the war. Nevertheless, the stupendous event had made an impression upon him, the more severe by reason of his own non-participation in it. A sensitive depth in his nature was perpetually harrowed by thought of it. Having, by this time, followed the records of history from their dim beginnings up to the present, he was confronted, as was every one, by an impassable barrier, which refused to yield to any philosophic explanation. Perhaps he was too near the catastrophe, in time, to gain the needed perspective. But the facts were constantly before him. Something had slipped in the great, good purpose of God. In the substrata of life a tremendous fault had occurred, bear-

ing its outward upheavals of death, suffering and disorder.

Three years at college had made a great difference in Mauney Bard. He had passed through the academic terms, like the unnoticed steps of a great staircase, without noticing that he was, in a sense, always climbing. He was climbing nearer to something—something perceived to be intangible, but worthy.

From his humble beginnings on Lantern Marsh farm, where his perspective was hedged by blind walls of pettiness on every side, he had emerged into a grateful breadth of vision, where, at his very feet, lay the treasures of accumulated knowledge and whence, too, the horizon was attractive with mystery.

He had become a man, at length, with a man's viewpoint and a mature sense of a personal participation in the affairs of the world. Three years of history had brought him to a point of view which included himself. Every student cannot be so favored by the unseen mechanism which moulds personality. Many, including the brilliant Miss Lorna Freeman, failed nothing in gaining an accurate knowledge of history. She seemed in eagerness for learning to be like the dry, cracked earth, eager for the rain that never quite fills it; but with all her great capacity for information she lacked the quality that had made Mauney older and more serious. The war did not make any appreciable difference in Lorna. It was a phenomenon, similar to, if vaster than, other wars, which would, in due course, afford her fascinating study. But to Mauney it had already loomed up as a vital obstacle to his philosophy of optimism, for all things culminated in it. All good that had ever been, met in it a blasting contradiction.

All hope of a satisfactory society met in it a destructive rebuff; all the quivering aspirations of his own developing mind found in it a dark abyss, frightful enough to quench them.

So it was that Mauney, at the end of his third year, lost immediate interest in his academic work and grappled with a problem of reality.

He grew serious and questioning. His auburn hair, which had darkened until its color was scarcely present, was parted carelessly above a face somewhat paled by thought, a face whose blue eyes were intense with sharp mental strife, and whose lips had changed from their boyish happiness to the determined line of serious manhood.

His problems had thus changed a good deal from the time when they concerned merely his personal liberty, for they now concerned rather the liberty of the human race. He had gradually emerged from selfish considerations. He had lost touch with his family. Old bonds no longer held him. The new thing—the cosmic consciousness—which he owed to the university training, took possession of his mind. Wonderful gift of the college! That a man, through its agency, should unconsciously loose himself from all that relates to personal passion and tune his being to the pitch of the general passion of mankind!

From Maxwell Lee, constantly bent over his laboratory desks, constantly delving into the secrets of disease, constantly at work, heroically striving against handicaps of poverty and ill-health, he absorbed a great truth of conduct, for he gradually came to understand that it was the vast desire for human betterment that

inspired this frail, but active, research student. Max loomed bigger than ever in his esteem. Three or four years had ripened their friendship, tested it in many ways, and proven it to be solid. Neither of them cared to leave 73 Franklin Street, partly because Mrs. Manton and Fred Stalton and the others had become strange fixtures in their lives, but mainly because they meant more to each other than either quite realized.

And Freda MacDowell had joined the ranks. Shortly after dropping out of her arts course she had met Gertrude and adopted 73 Franklin as her boarding house. She had now served two years as secretary in the Department of History, and was no more favorably impressed by education than on the evening of her conversation with Mauney at Professor de Freville's. Frequently she had a good deal to say on the subject, although Mauney always tried to avoid her. She had the big front room opposite Max's on the first floor, and there was a tasteful alcove with a desk and chairs in the hallway, where Max and she always sat to talk.

Apparently she had at last found her ideal boarding house. Her taste, cultivated by a half-dozen seasons in Merlton, and moulded by a gradual elimination of features objectionable or stereotyped, had become as whimsical as a middle-aged Parisian's taste in diet. Two years as an undergraduate of the university had sufficed to draw the ban upon women's residences and the mild espionage of fellow students. Her third year in arts had taught her conclusively that living with a maternal aunt was laying oneself needlessly open to constant misinterpretation. There were things she wanted to do—such as show herself friendly with Max Lee.

There were other things which she did—such as allow Nutbrown Hennigar to call upon her. Evidently, Mrs. Manton's house furnished what she wanted—freedom, comfort, protection from idle scandal. At any rate Mauney drew as much from her usual conversations.

But he was too busy to be greatly concerned with Freda; and, moreover, he had long since decided that she belonged to Lee. Max occasionally denied this, and characterized their relationship as merely a good friendship, but Mauney heard between his words.

Moreover there was Lorna Freeman, whom he had watched develop into an attractive womanhood. They were still together daily. He still took dinner at the professor's occasionally and followed dinner with long discussions in the smoky study upstairs. He liked the Freemans. He liked Lorna. He liked Merlton and his university life.

But at the end of three years, with only one more year to study, he began to take synoptic views of the general situation and to cast into the immediate future for a career.

During his fourth year the problem of a life-work forced itself upon him.

He told Professor Freeman his troubles as they smoked together. The historian seemed to appreciate the confidence.

"Well, Mauney," he said seriously, "The logical thing for you to do is to find out what you are best fitted for, and take up that work. You will be graduating next spring. The world is before you. No one but yourself can decide the question."

Hours when Mauney might have been cogitating on

the subject, were usually spent in delightful loneliness in his room, writing down his thoughts on history in his ledger, which had now grown to be a considerable volume of literature. He took it out of its long privacy one evening to show to Lorna. He read her snatches of things he had written, consciously opening the somewhat sacred recesses of his being to her. When he asked her for an opinion she had little to say.

"Oh, it's pretty stuff!" she admitted coolly—"a sort of effervescence from a student's mind!"

She was right. He mentally applauded her judgment. Surely, after all, it was nothing else. All the nights he had spent on it! All the impassioned moments he had worked to express his personal ideas of history! Nothing but a sort of effervescence! Surely, she was right. Cold, frank, truthful Lorna! How his admiration was wrung from him by her bald statement! He had wanted her to like it tremendously and praise it and acclaim it as worthy writing. But now he felt like thanking her for categorizing it with accurate appraisal. How accurate she was! "Effervescence!" When he returned home he threw the ledger down on his desk.

"Damn this effervescence!" he cursed with ruffled feelings. "Damn my student's mind! If this isn't real then I'm not real."

Of course, the situation in the class, with only two of them, always the same two, was provocative of a strain between them. He never felt that they had discovered the very thing that she had recommended in the stilted language of her first year—a *modus vivendi*.

She consistently defeated him at the examinations,

although he was quite indifferent to the fact. He noticed a peculiar jealousy in her that came to the surface at odd moments, when their respective intelligences were compared by the challenge of academic demands. He knew that, often enough, he could have answered a tutor's question first, but that he refrained in order to give her the advantage of priority.

She had become a beautiful woman, a blonde goddess of severely classical line and color. When he looked at her he favored her intelligence, and continued to accord her priority. But he felt that she was overshadowing and hindering him, and that a *modus vivendi* could be discovered only by some spiritual change in their relationship.

One solution seemed to be a personal declaration of independence. She deserved, no doubt, to be regarded as an academic rival, and thus treated; for, if ever an opportunity came for her to defeat him by a clever word or argument she never held back. If now, he were to retaliate, forgetting her sex, and try earnestly to beat her at her own game of wit, he would be truer to himself, and would create a more natural relationship in the class.

But, on the other hand, a different solution cropped up. If, by any means, he could spiritually overshadow her, break down her being into dependence upon his own; if, in short, he could but touch her affections, he would thus create harmony in the class, as well as accomplish a desirable feat. He knew well enough that he had ached to touch her hidden heart. He had sat, for nearly four years, looking at her, admiring her body as well as her mind, but had never been able once to

tell her in words, or in any other way, just how he felt about her.

This problem added itself to the several others that confronted him. He accused himself over and over of continued weakness. He must do something about Lorna Freeman. That was the great certitude before him. She could not be ignored. It was incumbent upon him either to dislike her or love her. Which would it be? She was like a bulky obstacle in his path, that could not be moved. His progress depended on shoving her aside or else winning her. Naturally he embraced the second method, as a trial.

He hired a car one autumn evening and took her driving out past Riverton into the country. The air was crisp and the west aglow with luminous green.

"You seem frightfully serious, Mauney," she remarked.

"So I am," he admitted. "I've never been more serious in my life."

She glanced from under her black hat and smiled a little impatiently.

"When one goes for a motor-drive one doesn't usually like to be so oppressively serious, does one? Have I the right to enquire as to what is making you so much absorbed in your thoughts?"

He nodded as he turned toward her.

"Yes," he said forcibly. "You've got a peach of a right to ask. I'm serious about you."

"Me?"

"Yes. I've tried for four years to get something said, and you've always been so preoccupied with an overweening interest in the surrounding world, that

I've never managed to say anything. Even now I haven't got five cents' worth of assurance. I don't altogether blame myself, either. I'm not an especially timid or fearful creature. I usually say what I want to say and let the devil take the consequences. And that, Lorna, is what I'm going to do right now."

She was surprised. Her blue eyes widened. Her perfect, if severe, lips opened to reply, but he was leaning toward her, ready to interrupt.

"Why have I always been so meekly worshipful?" he demanded. "Why have I always let you have your way? Is it just because you are a woman? If so—if you are a woman—why don't you sometimes treat me as if you were?"

Her face was a picture of utter astonishment.

"Mauney Bard!" she exclaimed. "Why don't you ask me one question at a time? You seem dreadfully upset about something, don't you?"

"Yes," he admitted, as he leaned closer to her. "I am. I'm upset over you."

She was strikingly good-looking at the moment. Her customary classical paleness was gone. A warmth of color, provoked by some sudden emotion, had usurped its place. She was surprised by his words and her eyes frankly looked her confusion.

"Lorna," he said, putting his arm about her shoulders. "I had to bring you here, away from everything. I—"

"Don't!" she implored, drawing quickly back. "I—I can't!"

Then she made a queer, gurgling sound in her throat, tried to speak, and ended by weeping with her face held between her hands.

As the car sped on Mauney sat regarding her in absolute mystification.

"Why on earth does the girl weep?" he meditated. "What have I done to her? Is my proffer of love an insult?"

It was a hoax of a drive. It became unbearable. After a long silence he ventured to change the subject entirely, and found her presently quite agreeable to talk about other matters. He was glad when he at last put her down at her home and said good-night. Then, returning to the car, he drove to the Medical Building, where the windows of Lee's laboratory were brilliantly lighted. After paying the driver he stood for a few moments on the walk trying to collect his self-control. He wanted to see Max, but knew that unless he paused he would stamp into the laboratory like a madman. He owed Lee some deference on account of the latter's important work. It was ten minutes before he opened the great front door of the building and ascended the iron staircase to the first floor. He rapped on the laboratory door.

"Who's there?" came Lee's voice, in an unnatural tone.

"Mauney."

"All right."

In a moment Max unlocked the door and stepped back. He had a bottle of whiskey in his hand with a corkscrew stuck into the cork. Without noticing Mauney's surprised expression, he turned to walk to a table where he continued his occupation of trying to draw the cork. His lean body was clothed in his long, white, laboratory gown, and his black hair hung in con-

fusion over his pale face. He evidently forgot that something in the present scene was bound to be dramatically new to Mauney. Without explanation he drawled, in his gentle voice:

"This whiskey, Mauney, is neither Olympian nectar nor fixed bayonets. I've frequently sipped better spirits, and I've occasionally tasted worse. Like you and me, my son, it was made before the war. Fortunately it lacks the throaty sting of recent distillation, but, on the other hand, it can hardly be said to possess the superb smoothness, the velvety, liqueur-like softness of real old spirits, such as I, and such as you, no doubt, have, at sundry times and in divers places, imbibed. I use the word 'imbibed' advisedly, and with nice selection from the swarm of verbs meaning to drink, such as sip, taste, sample, swallow, tipple, to say nothing of swig, and to leave out of consideration entirely such inelegant terms as snort, or even gargle."

Mauney was leaning against the desk watching him curiously and smiling at his mood. He wondered especially why Max was drinking.

"Do you want any help?" he asked, seeing that Lee still struggled with the cork.

"No, I scorn your assistance," he laughed. "There we are! Pop! It had a nice pop, hadn't it? And here's your glass. I suppose you're drinking?"

"Why, Max, old fellow! I'll drink with you, yes. I'm in a good mood for murder or anything, to-night."

Lee held up a beaker full of whiskey.

"Murder—eh? If that's how you feel put that glass back on the desk. Don't touch it. You're not in a fit mood for drinking, my son. In order to drink one

should be bathed in delightful reminiscences; one should feel at peace with the spacious present and most hopeful for the future."

"And yet," Mauney said, looking into his friend's dark eyes, "I don't seem to think you're in that delightful mood either. What's wrong?"

Lee laughed rather unrestrainedly. After quaffing off the beaker of liquor he filled the receptacle with water from a tap, drank it, smacked his lips, and then, putting down the beaker on the desk, lit a cigarette.

"I'm not really drunk, Mauney," he replied more soberly. "I'm taking this stuff for stimulation. My health is not the best, unfortunately. Keep it dark; but I was up to pay a visit to Dr. Adamson this afternoon. Well, he went over my chest, and I guess I know why they turned me down for the army. I've got T.B. all right, so he thinks. Don't be alarmed—"

"But you shouldn't be working," interrupted Mauney, in great astonishment over the news.

"So Adamson tried to tell me. But it's the fibrotic type—just a sort of shrivelling of one lung. Not a bit contagious, you know. Of course it weakens me, sure enough. And I do think it's a damned great misfortune, my son. Here I have my work pretty near in hand"—he made a gesture toward the apparatus that littered the desks—"and another year's work would probably give me the secret I'm after. I'm on the track, Mauney; I'm on the track."

"Good."

A tremendous pity for Lee possessed him, a pity that one man could never express to another. He thought of the quiet, gradual process of disease that had gone

on in Max's body, steadily sapping his strength. Why should fate have ordained this brilliant student to bear a disease that might have been visited more reasonably upon one who could never mean so much to the cause of science?

"Now, what I intend doing is to work on until I finish this bit of research work," Max informed him. "If I discover the cause of pernicious anæmia I'll be fairly happy, as you can imagine. If I don't—well, I'll have another whack at it after I rest up and get back in shape. I'm going to work right now. There's a chair and some cigarettes, Mauney. Sit down and stay a while anyway." He turned presently from his laboratory apparatus. "But you didn't explain your murderous mood. What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, it's nothing worth talking about," Mauney replied, simply.

Whether it was worth talking about or not, the next few days seemed to prove that it was worth thinking about. He found himself in the same unsatisfactory relation to Lorna as ever. He called one evening and asked her if she would like to stroll with him on their back lawn.

"Oh yes," she consented, "although it does sound childish, doesn't it?"

It was far from childish to Mauney. He looked down upon her pale, exquisite face, as they sat on a bench in the faded twilight and knew that something had to be done about her. He was determined not to let another day pass without settling once and for all the relationship that was to exist between them. Here beside him on the bench was the one woman who had

managed to cast a constant spell of attraction over him. For three years she had occupied a good deal of his thoughts. During this time he had become tolerably well acquainted with himself and longed now to become acquainted with the woman who had always held him so coolly at arm's length. He was particularly curious to know what explanation existed for her conduct a few nights previously in the motor car. Why had she resisted his embrace?

"Lorna," he said, at length, "I want to ask you a question. It may not mean much to you, but it means a lot to me."

"Well, Mauney," she said, with just a fleck of impatience in her voice. "I've been dreading this conversation. I know what you want to ask me and I'm not at all certain that I can explain. And yet I can't very easily deny you the right to ask."

"I don't see how you could in fairness, Lorna. I merely want to know why you repelled me the other night, when I tried to kiss you. Tell me if there was any other motive than just plain lack of affection for me. Was that it?"

He was leaning toward her for her reply, and his arm which lay across the back of the seat, touched her shoulders lightly. She did not move from the caress.

"Look here, Mauney," she said, in such a clear, unhampered tone that he almost started. "I think I can explain. I've always liked you a lot. You've always been a perfect gentleman to me. I've always admired your courtesy at all times. And I've always liked your ideas. I think I could have gone on for ever, dreaming life with you if—if—"

"If what, Lorna?"

"If you hadn't spoiled—I mean, when you tried to take me in your arms, that was a totally unknown idea. Not so much that, perhaps, but it was beyond me entirely. I felt that it symbolized something big, yet something so vastly new and foreign to my mind that I was frightened."

"Frightened?"

"That's it, exactly," she nodded. "I was frightened at having a new vista of life opened up suddenly, that way—unawares, taken off guard, if you can understand. I wasn't ready for it. You see, my mind is, in many ways, inexperienced. I don't know men at all. You've had more emotional experience than I have. I didn't mean to be cruel. In fact, that's why I cried, because I was afraid I had hurt your feelings."

A street lamp on Crandall Street now blossomed into light and sent a long, glancing shaft against her face. Mauney quivered with attraction.

"Are you actually afraid of me, Lorna?" he asked.

She looked up into his eyes a moment very thoughtfully.

"No—I guess not," she replied, with a noticeable hesitancy.

"Listen," he said, leaning nearer her and grasping her hand. "I've been torn to bits over you for three years. I've tried to put you out of my mind, but couldn't. What's the use of going on the way we have been?" even as he spoke his arm pressed her shoulders close to him, while she looked up into his face, pale and apprehensive.

"Don't you try to get away from me, either," he

said in a stern voice as she pushed with her hand against his bosom. "I won't stand for that any longer. You've got to listen to me, Lorna."

A dim passion akin to revenge possessed him. He pressed her close an instant and kissed her full upon the lips. Then she wilted, and dropped her head softly, with little sobs, against his shoulder.

"Lorna," he said. "Will you be my wife?"

She did not reply, but remained sheltered within the circle of his arms.

"You do me a great honor," she said at length, in a low voice. "But I will certainly have to consider this business very carefully. I'll tell you soon."

"How soon?"

"In about a month, I guess."

CHAPTER II.

MAUNEY FINDS A FRIEND.

WHILE Mauney waited the month for Lorna's matrimonial verdict, he occupied himself chiefly with study and with more writing in his ledger. Whatever might be the true character of these flashing impressions which he jotted down, they had become an essential part of existence, for they came to him with imperativeness.

The alcove in the hallway upstairs was a good place to write. He found that he could arrange his thoughts better within earshot of other people talking than within the quietness of his own room. The dull, monotonous murmur of conversation from the dining room below had the peculiar effect of keeping him psychically in touch with humanity. The frequent selections of the gramophone music, with the sound of Gertrude's feet slipping gracefully along the floor in the rhythm of a dance, or the voice of Fred Stalton singing some popular song to the gramophone's accompaniment, reminded him that history was concerned with all people, that it was not a subject of mere academic interest, but of life and blood, of gaiety and despair, of every emotion that warmed or cooled the hearts of people. Freda MacDowell would often pass him, seated by the hall desk, on her way to her room, nod-

ding with a friendly smile or indulging in a short word or two of conversation.

One evening she showed considerable interest in the subject of his labors, and excused herself for asking upon what he might be so assiduously bent.

"I'm afraid I'm wasting time, Miss MacDowell," he said, looking up from his big volume. "It's a hobby I have. Just scribbling down my impressions."

"It doesn't matter whether it's waste time or not," she said, "as long as you like doing it. I wish you'd loosen up a little, Mr. Bard, and invite me to read your stuff. Having seen you at work so constantly here every night, you can't blame me for having a woman's curiosity."

"Nothing would suit me better," he laughed. "If I had thought you would be interested I would have invited you long ago."

He rose and indicated a chair near his own.

"If you have time," he said. "But perhaps you are busy."

"Me—busy? Oh no! I'm the most leisurely person in the world. I'm just crazy to read your impressions. But what are your impressions about?"

She sat down and leaned her elbows on the edge of the desk.

"History."

"Dear me," she sighed, with a little chuckle. "How disappointing. I, too, have my own impressions of history, or should I say the history machine. I thought you were writing a romance with a lot of thrills in it. However, I'm anxious to see what you think of history."

For a moment she turned through the pages of his scrap-book, reading odd paragraphs here and there.

"I'd rather talk to you about it," she admitted, at length. "I'll start by asking you what history is."

"I'm not strong on definitions," he replied, glancing at the base of the desk lamp, purposely to avoid the gaze of her deep eyes. "And I'm hopeless when subjected to a catechism."

"Good. I knew you were. If I were to ask Nutbrown Hennigar that question—of course I know better—he'd proceed to bore me for an hour. Do you know, I hate history like sin. I wouldn't stay at this job of mine, except I've got to live by the sweat of my brow. There's Robert Freeman—just a kind of hard-boiled brains—he gives me the creeps. Alfred Tanner is bad enough. He's pretty well submerged in the business, too, although he has preserved a sense of humor. And Hennigar. What *do* you think?"

"What?" asked Maaney.

"He's writing a history of the war," she laughed. "I read some of his manuscript. He invited me to do so." She looked a playful reproach at Maaney, as though conscious of her self-invitation to read his writings. "And it's just the most amusing thing ever! He's got the whole war so definitely sized up that you don't feel any surprise at anything that happened. You feel that the war was just as natural as taking your coffee into the drawing room after dinner. You feel that the strategic movements in the battles cost nobody a moment's thought. The soldiers just emerge from the west salient and the east flank like so many automatic chess-pieces headed for their preordained positions. There's no smoke or explosions or blood in his battles

at all. Just 3,000 casualties, 500 prisoners, and a dent in the Allied line or the German line. He's done it so hardheadedly that I've nicknamed him Napoleon."

"But isn't he a pretty good friend of yours, Miss MacDowell?"

"Oh, wonderfully good," she smiled sarcastically. "He thrives on destructive criticism, and he really receives nothing else from me. The more I criticize him the more he thinks of me. I've never given him a single word of encouragement, never, and yet he keeps right on my trail. There used to be a saying that the best man is the one that's hardest for a woman to get. Hen-nigar can't qualify—he's the hardest to get rid of."

"Funny," said Mauney. "I half knew that was the case."

"Well, I must go and dress," she said, rising. "He's taking me to a dance to-night and I don't want to keep him waiting over an hour. His car has been at the door for twenty minutes already. By the way, I wish you would put your manuscript in on my desk. I'll be home some time to-night and would like to look over it."

At breakfast next morning he asked her what she thought of his writings.

"My judgment isn't worth a Chinese nickel," she replied. "But I read it all and I think it's a whizz and when I enjoy anything like that it must be unusual anyhow. I think it's just like you, and I thought of a dandy scheme just before I lopped off to sleep. Would you like to know what it is?"

"You bet," said Mauney eagerly.

"Well I'll tell you. I think you ought to whip it into shape, call it 'The Teaching of History' or some

such title, and have it published. It's a direct slam on the conventional methods of teaching history. It would start a mild sensation and sell like life-preservers at a shipwreck."

"I hadn't thought of publishing it," Mauney admitted.

"Give *me* credit for the idea," she laughed. "I've had an awful lot of experience with manuscripts, especially historical ones. Now, I'm game to take all that dope of yours down in shorthand from dictation and type it, if you approve of the idea."

Mauney's eyes burned with enthusiasm.

"It's a go!" he said, "Do you really mean it?"

"Try me, fair sir," she yawned.

"Of course I will insist on paying you for your services, Miss MacDowell."

"Naturally," she said. "You didn't think I'd work for nothing, did you?"

It was decided to wait until the Christmas holidays before commencing work on the manuscript. Mauney had an invitation to spend Christmas in Lockwood, at Jean Byrne's, but this could be easily declined. He knew that Jean was anxious to have him come to Lockwood after his own graduation, to teach in the High School. Her letter mentioned the fact that the present master in history was leaving in the spring, thus creating a vacancy. But to teach in Lockwood held no attraction for Mauney, and as for spending Christmas at her home—it would not be as enjoyable as getting to work on his manuscript.

* * * * *

Lorna's verdict was not given. Mauney saw her every day and found that, having once propounded the

question that vexed his soul and having once broken down the barrier of reserve between them, their relationship was much more workable. She treated him now, at last, like a woman, with more of the woman's art in her general address.

But Mauney's nature was severely independent. While he waited to learn her decision, he remained more strictly a friend than ever. He wanted her to decide the big question without the slightest influence from him. He was strangely content with his own attitude. He possessed enough masculine irrationality to feel boundlessly satisfied with what he had done, and failed to observe with what stolid apathy he was awaiting the result. One thing he knew—that he had taken up a definite attitude toward his old classmate, that had at least settled the unrest.

What particular arguments Lorna might be employing in the delicate mental process of arriving at a decision he was far from knowing, but he was tolerably certain that she had taken her family into her confidence, for the Professor and Mrs. Freeman both exhibited a new and fresher interest in him on the occasions he visited their home. Behind Freeman's cold, grey eyes lurked a stealthy light of objective analysis that rendered Mauney uncomfortable. Nothing was said for a time, until one Sunday evening after dinner the professor referred again to his choice of a career.

"It's very hard, Mauney, to make up one's mind what to do," he said quietly, with his customary smile. "You have, of course, before you the question of an academic career. It takes considerable courage to adopt such a life-work. There are many dangers of scholarship, such as the tendency to stereotypy and the temptations

to mental error. Then again, the scholar's work is unspectacular." Freeman raised his long index finger for emphasis. "You do not need to mind that. The popular idea of the scholar is the musty individual with high-powered spectacles, his nose one inch from a book at all times except when he's eating. But the truth is that the scholar is the real hero of society."

"I quite agree, Professor," Mauney admitted.

"Why! this world of ours is ruled not by government, but by ideas," said Freeman enthusiastically. "The university casts the legislature into shadow. The scholar toils as no laborer ever knew how to toil, through painful growth of mind, comparing, judging, until he gains a new conception of reality. From the difficult records and phenomena of life he bears forth his new ideas."

The eminent historian sat eagerly forward in his chair.

"Then the new idea spreads," he said, with a soft gesture of his hand. "It spreads like the mustard seed. Like the cloud no bigger than a man's hand it soon overspreads the whole sky to give rain to a parched earth. It is your scholar, Mauney, working in his intangible medium of thought, who builds up society from barbarism to civilization."

Mauney nodded.

"It's a wonderful life," he said. "I've often thought of taking up teaching."

"Well, in that case, you must decide what kind of teaching. Now as head of our department, I am constantly on the lookout for young men. We will have need for a new appointee on the staff this coming

autumn. I am in the position of offering you a lectureship, if you choose to consider it."

"That's much more than I ever expected," Mauney replied eagerly. "I'm sure I didn't even dream of any such wonderful opportunity. I scarcely know how to thank you. But I'm very much afraid of my own inability to fill such a post."

"We try to train you for your responsibilities," Freeman declared, evidently pleased with Mauney's attitude. "Perhaps you will need a few weeks to consider my proposal."

"No sir, I really don't need a minute," he asserted, "If I'm in order I would like to accept it immediately."

"Good," smiled Freeman, rising and extending his hand. He gave Mauney's hand a warm pressure. "Your enthusiasm augurs well and, as I naturally have most to say about departmental appointments, I am now really welcoming you to the staff. Of course, the information must be regarded as strictly confidential until your name is published in the fall lists. Even Lorna must not know. Continue your academic work faithfully. There will be sufficient time during the summer to prepare you for your duties."

Mauney's elation over this incident carried him along in secret happiness for the remaining weeks of the term. With a definite purpose in view he took up his historical work with renewed enthusiasm. Once again, as in his first days in Merlton, the lamp of knowledge shone brightly and he lived in great happiness within the zone of its cool, clear rays.

The Christmas vacation came, with the customary lull in college life, and he faced Freda MacDowell one morning, ready for the keeping of their private con-

tract. They discussed their plan of attack, after breakfast, seated together on the dining-room sofa. They decided to utilize the alcove in the upper hallway, and asked Gertrude's permission.

"Naturally," she consented, pausing in her occupation of transferring the breakfast dishes to the kitchen. "As long as you are not contemplating seditious literature."

"It is going to be pretty seditious, isn't it, Mr. Bard?" laughed Freda.

"In that case," purred Mrs. Manton, "I think the occasion demands a better setting. You may have the parlor, if you like. There's a table you can rest your typewriter on, and a comfortable couch upon which Mauney can extend his thoughtful form while he dictates his words of wisdom."

"Don't rub it in, Gertrude," he pleaded.

"Well, do you want the parlor, or not?"

"You bet we do," he agreed. "But you may grow tired of the noise."

"Oh, that's just fine," declared Freda enthusiastically. "If Sadie Grote wants to use the piano she can wait till we get through. Music is only music. But this book is going to be an event, mind you, Gertrude."

"I didn't say it wasn't, my dear."

"You'd better not, either."

"Little did I think," said Mrs. Manton in her low voice, putting down her dishes on the table, and facing the two with gentle cynicism, "that my humble abode would be the scene of authorship. Take my unbounded approval as granted."

"Shut up!" said Mauney.

"It's only what might be expected," remarked Fred

Stalton, who was commencing his own Christmas holidays. He was lounging, as of old, in his shirt sleeves, enjoying the first respite for months. "You know, Gert, it's a wonderful little home. It has seen some queer stunts pulled off. You remember we once harbored a man named Jolvin here. He evidently drew a lucky card when he signed on our staff as boarder. That bird drew a half million touch. There's luck in seventy-three. Take my word for it. I'm not jolted to find that a book is going to be written here either. I'll buy one of the first copies. And there's another stunt going to be pulled off in a couple of weeks, too."

"You don't tell me," purred Mrs. Manton. "What is it, pray?"

"Sadie Grote is going to get married!"

"Well, for heaven's sake," quoth the landlady, dropping into a chair and pulling her kimona about her. "When did Sadie decide to join the ranks of the tormented?"

"A day or two ago. Ain't she stepping some?"

"You bet she is, Freddie. She's a sly little fox. She never told me a word. I'm surprised that Sadie would tell you first."

"Well you see, Gert, she owed me that little courtesy, as I'm the guy that asked her to get married."

"Fred Stalton!" exclaimed Mrs. Manton.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Freda. "Congratulations!"

"Thanks, Miss MacDowell. I'll give you an invite to the wedding ceremony. We're going to pull it off about New Year's in swell style. Down at Belmont Tabernacle. Got the preacher engaged and everything. You've all got to come. Cheer up, Gert, I know what's troubling you. We're not going to keep house. We're

going to live right on at seventy-three. There's luck in the number."

"Well, Freddie, I'm surprised at you," she admitted. "To think of a shrewd chap like yourself getting married."

"Isn't marriage a good thing, Gertrude?" he laughed.

"Yes. A good thing to be through with! May the ashes of my deceased husband lie perfectly peaceful as I talk! But this astonishes me considerably."

Mrs. Manton carried her dishes out to the kitchen and returned for a second load, in her customary suave manner, as if, in sooth, nothing however astonishing, could break in upon the even tenor of her life.

"Wonders and more wonders," she said. "It won't be long until my little family are all gone. Think of me, widowed at thirty-five, with my children getting married like this. What am I to do, Miss MacDowell?"

"Why, there's just one solution under the sun, Gertrude," said Freda, seriously.

"What's that, pray?"

"You'll have to get married again. You'll have to select another husband. Of course I never heard anything about your first one, but perhaps if you try again the picking will be better."

"My first husband was really a prince of a chap," she said calmly. "I don't keep any photos because I hate to be reminded of what a fine fellow he was. But if you had seen him you would have fallen for him at once. No, Miss MacDowell, my quarrel was certainly not with George Manton in particular, but rather with the fact of marriage in general."

"I see," laughed Freda. "I suppose you didn't like to be tied down."

"Precisely the case, my dear. My nature was, and is, one of those unfortunate ones that doesn't see sermons in stones, or poems in running brooks, or eternal happiness within the confines of a brick residence. I have never, even yet, reached the slippers-and-fireplace stage, and have never wearied of variety. I have never shed a tear of remorse that, at thirty-five, I am not putting my children to bed, and I was brought up to love commotion and a life of shifting change. I'm really a gypsy, you know, I love horses and I love to be going. My dear husband was a successful business man with a germ of the *pater familias* about him. He never quite got me, unfortunately. I worshipped the ground he walked on, but I never considered that my affection for him should change my home into a nunnery, nor that I should acknowledge my affection by living a hermetically-sealed life. Marriage! You really mustn't mention it to me. I'm afraid I rebelled against its restrictions once and for all."

"Gertrude is rather deep," Mauney said to Freda, later, as they started putting the parlor in order for their task.

"Yes, she is," Freda admitted. "She has as many brains as three average women, as much pep as twenty, and less caution than any I ever met. She really is a gypsy, I believe. I'd like to know her whole life.—Don't you think I had better use this table?"

"Sure. Put the typewriter there. We can have more light on the scene, too."

Mauney raised the front curtains to let in the dull, white glare of the snow-covered street.

"Now I'm going to lounge on the sofa with this scrap-album on my knees, if you'll pardon my infor-

mality, and let you have my ideas in straight-from-the-shoulder sentences."

"That's the correct way," she laughed, seating herself beside the round centre table and adjusting the ribbons of her typewriter. "If you don't go too fast I can catch it directly on the machine. What are you going to call the book?"

"Thoughts on the Teaching of History."

"Fine. What about an introduction?"

"Better have one, eh?"

"Yes. I would suggest a breezy opening of some sort for the purpose of getting under way."

Mauney reclined on the sofa and smoked a cigarette. Presently he dictated, between periods of noise from the busy typewriter:

"Solomon was right. There is no end to making books. Why should any modern writer, with surfeit of literary heritage from past ages, seek to augment their number? Everything worth saying has been said already. Every vagary of thought, every wisp of emotion, every particle of knowledge has been crystallized in books. It is impossible for any contemporary to insinuate his thought, however perspicacious, further than human thought has been already insinuated. It is impossible for a modern writer to wiggle his pen in any form of gyration different from the gyrations of the multitudinous pens, crow-quills and styluses that have wiggled throughout the centuries. Repetition, imitation, plagiarism! Everything we write down has been written under, as in a palimpsest, whether or not we perceive the dim characters, all but erased through time. A book is no longer 'the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up,' but rather

a craven member of a jingling throng who limp in tedious masquerade past the grand-stand of a plethoric and indolent public.

"Books, books! Acres of books, as if a poor, solitary author could possibly maintain his inspiration in the midst of such overpowering evidence of ultimate futility!

"The public have been bored with much writing on the subject of history, and recently much new history has been made. We hold no assurance, nor do we give any, that this rambling communication on the Teaching of History will do more than limp past the grand-stand already mentioned. What will be herein set forth is a description of the author's sentiments rather than a didactic scheme, written from the standpoint of a student of history rather than from the full knowledge of a scholar."

"I think," said Freda, as she pounded out the last words of the preface, "that you're too modest. But never mind, you're writing the book, not me. You don't seem to realize that what the public want is hot air, not a gentleman's modest viewpoint."

Mauney laughed, and sat up on the sofa, watching her fingers fly over the keys.

"I appreciate the value of hot air, thoroughly, Miss MacDowell, but I really want to be sincere in this business. Do you know—it's great fun writing a book—with you."

"I thank you," she said, dropping her hands in her lap with a sigh. "Now, have you got your first chapter ready to commence?"

"Yes, call it, 'The Beginner's Preconceptions of History.' Are you ready?"

"Ever at thy service!"

With a glance at her roguish face he settled down again upon the comfortable sofa and dictated once more from the fullness of his heart. They worked hard until, at noon, Maxwell Lee opened the parlor door, sticking in his head and glancing from one to the other.

"Hello!" he said, in a surprised tone. "You two look busy."

"Indeed we are, Max," said Freda, stopping her work. "Mauney—I mean Mr. Bard—is pouring forth his theories of history, reconstructed, and I, as you see, am his amanuensis."

"Great stuff!" drawled Max, entering the room, and standing beside the sofa he continued: "You old bear, I'm glad you're blossoming out into letters, and I'm glad you've got such an excellent amanuensis."

Mauney glanced from his face to Freda's with a peculiar feeling that he had been caught trespassing, ever so little, upon Lee's property, but consoled himself with the knowledge that his relation to Miss MacDowell was frankly a commercial one, or at most, but friendly.

"How are things, Max?" he asked.

"So, so. I'm going home for a week's rest. I just found out to-day that the sight of that laboratory was beginning to bore me to tears." He paused to remove his overcoat. "Am I butting in?"

He turned toward Freda, as he asked the question.

"I suppose you are, Max. But who has a better license?"

"Hear, hear!" said Mauney. "Sit down, you prune, and have a smoke. I've just about drained myself of language, anyway, and I can smell beefsteak frying."

"And while you two are smoking," said Freda, rising, "I'm going out to give Gertrude a hand with the dinner."

When she had gone Mauney smoked in silence for an awkward moment.

"How's the work, Max?"

"Coming along fine. I really think I've struck something big."

"Gee, that's good. More power to you. Feeling all-right?"

"Oh yes!" he answered. "Fairly good, I could stand a little more pep, though. After I get rested up for a week or so I'll be right on the job again."

Mauney rose and walked slowly toward the front window and stood looking out on the snow-covered street. For once he failed to understand his own feelings. There was a hot spot in his bosom, burning larger and larger. It had something to do with Freda MacDowell he was sure, because he could see her face before him with its bewitching comfort. It had something to do with Max, too. He longed for words, but they were tied securely within the remotest recesses of his being. He turned and walked slowly back. Lee was sitting idly smoking, with his lanky legs carelessly crossed. He noticed that Max's face was now flushed.

"It's a devilish cold day, Max," he said awkwardly.

"Um-h'm. I think it's going to snow," Lee responded, rising and starting slowly for the door. It was dinner-time. In getting out the door they made mutual offers of priority to each other. As they walked toward the dining room Mauney reflected that they had never done this before, and that never before, during their long acquaintance had the weather been a topic of conversation.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT HAPPINESS.

THE groundwork of Mauney's book on history was completed, with Freda's careful assistance, during the Christmas holidays, and finished in final form by the end of March, when the manuscript was submitted to Locke & Son, Publishers. Mauney was willing to allow Freda to choose the publisher, having learned to repose mysterious confidence in her judgment of such practical matters. He possessed none too sanguine an opinion of the book's fate, suffering from an author's customary self-depreciation, and was, therefore, greatly and pleasantly surprised a month later, to receive a letter from Locke & Son stating that they had accepted it for publication and would shortly carry it to press. When he expressed his surprise Freda seemed not at all excited by the news, as evidently she had not shared his diffidence.

"Mauney," she exclaimed, with a hopeless shake of her head, "you are the most mournful prophet. In the first place, what you said in it is just contrary enough to the accepted view of history to stir certain folks up a little. But I have withheld from you the real story until now. Do you know why Locke accepted it?"

"No," he answered. "That's what's puzzling me."

"Then I'll tell you," she laughed. "I knew that the publisher would submit that manuscript to somebody in the History Department for an opinion. They picked on our friend Nutbrown Hennigar. Well, maybe you can imagine what he would have to say about it. He dictated his letter to me. Of all the letters I have ever seen it took the red ticket for pure, unadulterated blasphemy. He told Locke that your manuscript was, to begin with, merely the asinine vaporings of an unsophisticated stripling from away back. He said that your attitude towards history reminded him of a starving laborer suddenly confronted with a seven-course dinner. He considers your arguments subversive, crudely iconoclastic, tintured by a raw individualistic attitude, blurred by an emotionalism approaching sentimentality, that your position could never be subscribed to by any serious student of history, and that the firm of Locke & Son would be extremely ill-advised in publishing so puerile a production."

"The dirty cur!" interrupted Mauney. "All he has to do is live on his father's reputation and crowd down the under-dog. I'd love to poison that small, squeaking excuse for a man!"

"Oh, don't think of it!" mocked Freda, with a subtle smile. "Don't poison anybody that can help you. Love your enemies, for they're useful. If he had contented himself to praise faintly, Locke would never have printed it. It was Nutbrown's loud damns that excited their curiosity. They thought that anything so subversive and revolutionary and so tintured by crude feeling would sell pretty well, and I think so, too, Mauney. You did *me* good when you lambasted these fossilized specimens of the teaching profession who

think History is merely an opportunity for displaying academic methods. You are indeed a very raw youth," she added with a mischievous twinkle in her eye, "but you said a mouthful, for until university students are shown that history is *human* they will never take a proper interest in the subject."

"I believe that," said Mauney.

Freda sat up sharply. "Just you wait," she said, tapping the desk with her knuckles. "It's going to be a great old splash and Nutbrown will be suddenly seized with an acute pain in his higher criticism."

"Say, do you know I've a secret to tell you," said Mauney, after a moment's reflection. "I'm not really supposed to tell anybody, but I'm going to tell you. What do you think has happened?"

"Well, perhaps I have an idea," she said with a particularly blasé yawn. "But I might be wrong, so maybe you'd better tell me."

"I'm going to lecture in history next fall. What do you think about that?"

"My dear man, I've known that for two months."

"Well, aren't you glad?" he asked, puzzled by her apathetic expression.

Her eyes narrowed as if she were weighing the elements of the case.

"I can't say that I am," she replied. "You weren't cut out for a professor. Please pardon my abruptness, but that's just it. I'm sure you're happy over it, and I have no intention of prophesying. My knowledge of university life has been gained by keeping my eyes open, and I know the crowd. You won't agree with them. You're too vital, if I may be allowed to use the expression."

"I feel like thanking you for that, Miss MacDowell."

"You don't need to. They aren't such a bad lot. My first attitude was one of intolerance, but now I pity them. There they are, up to the ears in thankless routine, frozen by the currents of pure mentality, no heart left, lopsided, fossilized, hopeless. I wish I were running the university."

There was such frank zeal in her wish that Mauney inquired as to what changes she would make if she had her way.

"Well," she said. "In the first place I'm so sorry for the president that I could shed tears of real brine. They put him up in the clouds with a gold halo round his head and forget that he eats meat and potatoes and frequently perspires. He's so busy addressing meetings, signing documents, preaching sermons and being necessarily nice to everybody in general that he has practically nothing to do with the university. He might as well have an office down town and be done with it. They expect him to be as perfect as the god they have made of him, and if he ever makes a mistake the big howl starts. I'd like to go into his office some day and kiss him right on the forehead and say: 'Cheer up, old chap, you're a winner!'"

"That ought to help a little," laughed Mauney. "What else would you do for the university?"

"Why, I'd cut a great big window to let some sunshine into the history department. And I'd fire Nutbrown Hennigar and give him a job as aide-de-camp to some fat society woman up in the North End. He's an example of the vapid young man who gains preferment solely through family influence. Then I'd take Uncle Alfred Tanner aside and explain to him that he

can never gain the personal development to which his noble heart entitles him so long as he submits to the curbing influence of his brother-in-law's clever dictatorship. Then I'd walk into Freeman's office and, for purposes of smoothness, agree with him at the outset that nothing is good for anything, that all human effort is futile, that there naturally is no God, and then inquire naively, having got this settled, what he wanted to do next? I'd like to see that man get loosened up, just for once. I've often sat at my desk and just simply suffered to foxtrot with him all over the history department. When Freeman dies they ought to put a book in his hand instead of a lily."

* * * * *

Mauney was reminded of Freda's tirade against Freeman a few nights later when he accepted an invitation to dine at the historian's quiet home. Of late he had unconsciously shunned the family, for reasons none too clear even to his own understanding. At heart he dimly realized that Lorna herself was the reason. He justly accused himself of having treated her with a species of neglect which must have been decidedly puzzling to her. Her matrimonial decision might have been arrived at long ago, for all he knew. Although it was his place, as the lover he had depicted himself, to inquire, he had nevertheless procrastinated. There was a great deal of apathy in his nature. He noticed that, so long as he did not see her or talk with her, he found no element of his being that regarded her as necessary. When, however, he was presented with Lorna in person, as upon this evening, the old attrac-

tions sprang to life once more, as if her presence were the essential cause.

He arrived early and talked with her on the rear lawn while they awaited dinner, which was being prepared by Mrs. Freeman herself. The high stone wall at the back of the lawn abutted directly on the western portion of the university grounds, so close to the history department that a small door had been cut in the wall to facilitate the professor's short cuts to and from work.

They talked of many impersonal matters. It struck Mauney as almost absurd that this young woman had been asked to marry him. The impersonal attitude into which he had gradually drifted seemed to suit Lorna well enough, and as he talked with her he began at last to understand her real nature. Though pure and blameless, she was so narrowed by the lack of certain emotions as to be, from a romantic standpoint, negative. He saw it better now than ever before. The words that are a woman's words and never a man's, the whimsical details of deportment and address that belong peculiarly to women, the glances, the accents, the delicate tricks of wit, the sallies of playfulness—these were not in Lorna. He knew she liked him, but her presence was neither warm nor comforting. Her college training had bestowed, or perhaps merely emphasized, this negative quality of mind which Mauney at length recognized and disliked. Lorna knew that men loved women; knew it to be an accepted and doubtlessly beautiful arrangement, and one worthy of emulation, but she did not realize that this love of a man was no mere arrangement of pretty presentations, but a vital, all-absorbing, tremulous thing from begin-

ning to end. Most women lived by the power of it: Lorna labelled it, pigeonholed it, and missed it.

He was tolerably sure that she did not hold it against him, that he had not again referred to matters of love. He could more easily imagine her appreciating his silence. Like her father and mother, her true character became evident only after long acquaintance.

He had imagined the professor and his wife to be passably happy together until impressed by Mrs. Freeman's constant, mysterious sadness. Whether or not they began life together in perfect personal harmony was uncertain. But regarding their present relationship Mauney entertained no doubt. They had drifted so far apart that scarcely any common ground remained. Mrs. Freeman, shocked by her husband's growing agnosticism, had clung for refuge more tightly than ever to dogmatic tenets of religion which at all times she had held to tightly enough. The farther Freeman drifted from simple religion the more desperately did she hold on, until their home life was rendered a frequent scene of controversial unpleasantness.

At one time, not many years since, they had both attended church and found sufficient spiritual satisfaction in the service. But the increasing adventures of his mental life had gradually wooed Freeman away. Something of an authority on ritual, he fell to investigating the subject afresh, to be rewarded by the discovery of a few errors. These had reference to recondite matters of priestly vestment and entailed hair-splitting differences of no importance. It became a hobby. The investigation led him on into comparative theology and biblical criticism, the upshot being a declaration of a position of religious agnosticism. At first he be-

came a cheerful pragmatist, then an adroit sceptic, whereupon Mrs. Freeman's childlike faith, harshly fortifying itself, grew slowly militant and became eventually not so much childlike as childish.

Even an outsider felt the friction just beneath the surface. Mauney, unprepared to believe how completely man and wife could be separated by matters of faith, nevertheless saw the patent duality of the Freeman home—the professor, ruling his upstairs study and using the place as a boarding house, while Mrs. Freeman roamed the rest of the house in spacious tragedy of manner. The one common ground between them was Lorna, who, as might be expected, had problems of tact and opinion to solve. When guests were in the house she frequently came between her parents in the role of shock absorber, displaying considerable ingenuity. On one occasion, Mauney having broached a religious argument at the dinner-table, Lorna purposely upset a tumbler of water. This meant a quick jump-up for every one and was a complete tactical success since, with the deluged cover tented up on serviette rings, other topics suggested themselves.

On this particular spring evening, relationships seemed happier. They sat down at the table in good spirits. Freeman was apparently satisfied with his mental progress during the day just finished, for he was lightsome of manner, disposed to talk in a good-natured way and looked from Mauney to Lorna with an expression almost of tenderness. Mauney had never been made to feel quite so much at home. The fading light of evening looked in through the large back-windows of the cozy dining-room like a soft caress upon a scene of family compactness, where the four, seated at the

cardinal points of the circular table, enjoyed their food by the rich, yellow light of a centrally-placed, silver candelabra. Lorna, gowned in a simple white frock, flickered pleasantly opposite Mauney. The professor's face stared at the candles while his wife bowed her head to say grace. Mrs. Freeman referred to the younger members of the family as "You children." It was all very snug and private and natural.

"Just think," she said in her soft, slow inflection. "Another two weeks and you will both be finished with your college courses. How the time does go! You leave college halls to enter God's great world."

"Now, Mother," said Lorna, good-naturedly, "it's not quite so serious as all that, I hope."

"We are taught to believe it's a pretty serious affair, Lorna," she responded. "The Scriptures tell us—"

"And the Scriptures are quite right," smiled Freeman bitterly. "It is certainly a serious, tragic affair. Personally, I can't conceive of anything half so tragic as life."

"In what way, Dad?"

"Why, any way you wish to look at it," he answered quietly, as he served the dinner. "I think life is the most stupendous tragedy imaginable, from the very bottom of the scale to the top. The battle is to the strong," he said impressively. "It's the strong who defeat the weak and survive."

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Freeman, "that Mr. Darwin will have quite an account to give in the day of reckoning."

Mauney was not accustomed to such conversation during his meals and felt embarrassed by the evident estrangement of the two viewpoints expressed.

"And when, my dear, is the day of reckoning?" enquired the professor gently.

"If you had been at church last Sunday, Robert," she said in a childish, teasing way, "you would have heard about it from our pastor."

"He has no more information on the subject than I have," affirmed Freeman. "Why should I go to listen to a man who could not possibly express any ideas or argument with which my mind has not already grappled? If there were any such thing as a day of reckoning—which there definitely is *not*—Darwin would be able to present as good a front as most of us. He merely emphasized a few biological laws which have precisely the same application to the *genus homo* as to the rest. If I could see one solitary reason for thinking that there is a God who cares one iota for us and our fates I might be convinced. But I know one fact for sure—that the strong win and the weak lose. There's no argument about it, people. It's a fact."

"But don't you think, Dad," said Lorna politely, "that the weak may win by being wiser than the strong?"

"Oh, yes, but if a man's wise he's strong, not weak. Man is stronger than the elephant and the lion for that very reason. He's wiser than they. His brains have made civilization safe from the inroads of the wild animals. He has subjugated all other species to his own control."

"And having done so, Professor," asked Mauney, "what remains? What is the future of man?"

"Endless labor," he immediately replied. "All he can do is to study his past mistakes, profit by them, and attempt, ever and anon, to improve his social state. New moralities will crop up from time to time, for

moral standards are evolutionary and are merely suited to existing states. Man's fate is solely to move through shifting phases, through various new codes of ethics and to dream of a happiness which is always out of sight."

Mauney refrained from continuing the argument, for he noticed that Mrs. Freeman was flushed as she ate her dinner in preoccupied silence. They tried to change the subject, but the meal ended in awkward stiffness. Mauney continued to think of that happiness, which was always out of sight and that struggle which was always won by the strong. The thoughts really disturbed him, for he was thinking indefinitely of Maxwell Lee. Could it be possible that Freeman was right?

The historian finished his meal in silence. Mauney, with queer biological insight, imagined the man to be secretly glorying over the victory suggested by the meat on his plate. It had once been alive. Man was subjecting it to the service of his pilgrimage of being.

A subtle chill had entered by the window from the outside world, rendering this compact family group no longer intimate friends. They were now selfish animals, eating other animals, by the light of burning talow. And it seemed fitting that the light was so dim and flickering—all was mystery, cold, impenetrable, and the great happiness was out of sight.

The two men smoked anon in the familiar study upstairs. Mauney conversed with his professor in a mood of semi-detachment, unable to pull from his eyes a screen that was changing the apparent world to new interpretations. Even the study was permeated with the chill atmosphere that existed only in the imagination. Little currents of cool air played upon his spine

like horrid fears. The volumes that filled Freeman's capacious shelves stood like dangerous enemies against whom he felt he must be on guard. In the chair before him sat and smoked a puny man whom Merlton and a continent acclaimed as great. But the screen was drawing across him too—a dangerous menace grew mysteriously out of the perennial smile that played upon his lips. He would smile life out, this dangerous man who had conquered existence, and reduced existence to its bare biological structure. While Mauney sat beside him the historian's words affected him more deeply than they had ever done before. The hot spot burned in Mauney's breast, as it had burned at Christmas with Maxwell Lee. He suffered from its heat; he struggled inwardly, knowing that even seated in a quiet upstairs study, his own fate, hinging on the direction of his tempted thoughts, was in danger of change.

At last it was ended. It was time for him to leave the scholar with his books. He rose from his chair and went downstairs, glad to be away from him. He carried confusion of mind with him to the drawing room where Lorna sat at the piano, playing. He was puzzled. He did not interrupt her, but stood near the instrument watching her. He wanted to leave the house, for the burning, the unexplained, but painful burning continued in his breast, and he coveted solitude.

"Did you like that?" she said, as she finished, and her blue eyes turned to his. In them she saw no conscious response. "You're moody to-night, aren't you Mauney?" she asked indifferently.

"Oh, play some more, Lorna," he said, trying to smile. "Please do."

He sank thoughtfully into a chair as she continued,

but he heard not a note of her music. A sadness such as had never possessed him had settled upon his being. It was as if he had already gone to the professor and said:

"I am leaving. I am going far away. I appreciate all your kindness. But I've got to go."

It was as if he had already gone to Mrs. Freeman and said: "Good-bye. You have been decent to me, but something takes me away for ever from your sad home."

And it was exactly as if he had interrupted the girl at the piano to say:

"Lorna, it was all a sad mistake. Forgive me, I've been inconsiderate. I thought I loved you, but now I know that it was the challenge of your mind that attracted me. I am going. Think of me as a foolish boy who did not understand himself."

In the keen stress of his present mood he had mentally said these things as he sat near her. Some challenge of this home had awakened him to a confused realization of the vital quality of life. What was it? He could not understand. But he knew that he had a great account to settle with things. His deepest convictions had been touched at their source. He wanted to be up in arms to protect them.

The most absurd thing that he could possibly bring himself to imagine was the fact that he had asked this woman at the piano to become his wife. Still more absurd was his present obligation of chivalry to enquire now as to her final decision. With a sense of playing with sacred things, he wound up his courage and spoke to her, when she finished her music.

"Lorna, please come and sit near me," he said, automatically rising. "I want to say something to you."

She turned slowly on the piano stool and hesitated, while she looked in a surprised way from his face to the chair and then at his face again. She had never seen the commanding features before. His blue eyes were severely direct, his brow puckered with seriousness, his mouth determined. He was not to be denied, as she could divine from his manner.

He turned the chair for her to sit down and then when she was seated he quickly resumed his own chair.

"Matters have hung fire long enough between us, Lorna," he said. "I want to know what you have decided to do about me?"

"Mauney!" she replied, in a tone of anger, that brought a flush to her face. "I thought you had forgotten all about that. . . . And I have been so humiliated!"

"Naturally you would be," he admitted. "I apologize for what seemed my indifference. You have had a long time to consider what I asked you, and I am here to enquire as to your decision."

"Why on earth be so wretchedly business-like about it?" she blurted angrily. "One would imagine you were trying to sell me a house?"

"Again, Lorna, you must pardon me," he said slowly, and paused, while he shifted in his chair. "I really did not mean to give that impression."

"You've hardly come near me since that night when you—when you kissed me!" She was beside herself with anger, although she spoke in almost a whisper. "Do you think I am the kind of girl you can kiss when you please, and then, after acting coldly for several

months resume operations once more at your own whimsical choice? Do you imagine that I relish such treatment?"

"No doubt you don't, Lorna," he said. "But do you, on the other hand, realize that you are a girl whom I find it very hard to know *how* to treat? When I asked you to marry me you replied quite calmly that you would have to consider the business very cautiously. Well, then, I've given you time to be about as cautious as you wish. What have you decided to do?"

"I haven't decided to do anything, Mauney," she replied in a tone of complete exasperation. "How do I know whether I want to marry you or not? I think it's totally absurd. I scarcely know you. I know nothing about your family—you've never mentioned them."

"Why should I? The girl I marry isn't going to marry my family—am I to take your answer as 'No'?"

"I'm afraid you are," she replied tensely. "How could you possibly expect any other answer?"

"Well," he said, hotly, "there are several reasons why I might expect another kind of answer."

"Oh, please don't!" she half gasped, raising her hand as if his mood greatly disturbed her.

"I'm going to tell you one or two of those reasons, Lorna. I don't think I have an exaggerated opinion of myself by any means, but, at the same time, I believe my family were just as good as yours and—"

"Oh, Mauney, don't, please!" she implored, rising, and burying her face in her hands. While he paused he was surprised to observe her shoulders twitching. In a moment she wept.

"I can't stand this," she said, sobbing. "I've never quarrelled with anyone before."

Mauney walked to the piano and leaned thoughtfully against it.

"I'll say no more, Lorna," he said at length. "I'm really sorry to have upset you this way and ask your pardon most humbly."

"All right, Mauney," she said, gradually gaining control of herself. "You are pardoned, but please don't ever mention marriage to me again. Will you promise?"

"I promise that," he said simply.

"You know we are both so young," she continued. "We were childish to mention it. Don't you think so?"

"I do indeed."

She came close to him and did a very unexpected thing. She put one hand on each of his shoulders and looked up seriously into his eyes.

"I don't know anything about men," she said with all the simplicity of a child. "I hope I haven't hurt your feelings. I wouldn't want to do that. I've always liked you. Why can't we be friends?"

"That will suit me, perfectly," he said. "As a matter of fact, Lorna, that's all we *can* be."

"I know it," she replied, turning away. "Let's not be foolish again. Dad told me something to-day and I've been waiting for an opportunity to mention it—your appointment on the history staff. Her voice had resumed its customary tone. You're awfully lucky, Mauney. Dad has unbounded faith in your ability. I just thought I'd mention it. Aren't you terribly happy about it?"

"I can't tell," he said slowly. "I'm not in a mood to lie just now. I'm not happy just now. I'm most unreasonably sad."

CHAPTER IV.

MAUNEY AND FREDA HAVE A TALK.

MAUNEY could not sleep that night when he had returned to his room. For two hours he tossed restlessly on his bed when, finding sleep utterly impossible, he got up, put on his slippers and dressing gown to descend to the dining room, where the hostess and Stalton and two strangers, one a man the other a woman, were seated at cards around the table. Mrs. Manton looked up at the sound of his slippered step.

"Well, look what God has sent us," she softly exclaimed. "If you have any money you'd better get into the game, Mauney."

She introduced the strangers.

"Mr. Wright and Miss Wanly have dropped in for a few hands. Nobody seems to be winning," she went on. "Maybe you are the man with the rats. What do you say?"

"Why, I say 'yes' of course," Mauney quickly responded. "I don't know how to play, but I'm sure I could learn it in five minutes. Will you show me how?"

He drew up a chair while she quickly explained the principles of the game.

"All right," he said, picking up his first hand. "I'm on. I've got it cold. Give me one card, please."

"Whew!" exclaimed Stalton, "That sounds interesting. Give me one, Gert."

"Well here's where I drop out," she soon proclaimed as the betting continued. "Go on, Mauney, raise him."

"I will, indeed," he replied: "I'll raise you a dollar, Freddie."

"A dollar, eh?" soliloquized Stalton, glancing sharply at Mauney's face. "I'll see you and bump her up two more."

Both the others put down their hands and settled forward in their seats to watch the game.

"Good," said Mauney. "I'll see you and raise you two. What do you say to that?"

"Ho! ho! The boy is right there!" said Stalton, placing a chip on the table. "I'll just call you, Mauney. What have you got?"

Mauney placed his cards on the table.

"For heaven's sake," exclaimed Mrs. Manton, examining them. "A royal flush! Rather nice, too, Freddie!"

She brushed the pile of money toward the winner and gathering up the cards handed them to Mauney to deal.

"No," he said, getting up from the table. "I'm not going to play any longer."

"What's the matter?" she enquired, curiously.

"You tell me. I'm all out of gear. I've been trying vainly to sleep for two hours. Go on with the game. Here, Gertrude, you take this pot and play with it. I don't want it. I'll lounge over here for a while."

He lay down on the sofa and lit a cigarette.

"Maybe you've been working too hard, Mauney," she said, going over to his side and touching his brow with her soft, jewelled hand. "You're hot."

She turned for a moment to excuse herself temporarily from the game and sat on the edge of the sofa.

"You'll be all right, boy," she said in her deep tone. "I guess you're tired out after your long term of work. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I'm afraid not, Gertrude. It's just a cranky mood I'm in."

"Would you like some coffee?" she asked.

"No thanks. I'm not having any. I'm just fidgety and disagreeable."

"I never saw you like this before. I'm afraid you've been taking life too seriously. I know you don't mind me talking. Excuse me a minute. I'm just going upstairs to see if your room's properly aired and made up."

"It's fine, Gertrude," he said. "Don't bother. The room's got nothing to do with it."

However, she was not to be dissuaded.

In a few moments she returned with a folded newspaper in her hand.

"Did you see the literary supplement of the *Globe*, Mauney?" she asked. "Well, here's a half column that ought to cheer you up a little. Read it."

Taking the proffered journal he read the portion indicated under the Book Review section:

"Thoughts on the Teaching of History, by Mauney Bard, (Locke & Son, 8vo, cloth, \$2.50). It is some time since so refreshing a volume has appeared, dealing with a subject of technical education. In style, Mr. Bard, whose voice is heard for the first time, has achieved pleasing success. Most technical treatises have at least a few chapters that challenge the reader's patience, but the one under review has apparently none. It is the work of one undoubtedly in love with his sub-

ject, and if there are sentiments expressed which, perhaps, can receive nothing but criticism from established authorities, yet all differences of opinion will be excused by reason of Mr. Bard's delightful affection for history and all that pertains to it.

"While not acclaiming history as the only considerable subject on university time-tables, he nevertheless supports his argument that it is one of the most important, and shows graphically certain methods and mental attitudes which are calculated to improve the teacher's success. To him, history is not merely a tool to be used for nurturing a strong national spirit, although it serves this function, but is, *par excellence*, a door to the understanding of human nature. Some of his remarks are worth repeating, as for example, the following passage from his chapter on the Substance of History:

"History is a record of the conduct of our human predecessors, considered *en masse*, a record, which, taking groups of people as its working unit, is necessarily sketchy and can approach the human past only in fairly broad outlines. But there is one perfect history. Locked up in our thoughts, hidden in our bodies, reposes still some influence of every act, mental or physical, performed by every one of our ancestors. The history obtained from books is dead. Man is the living history. He is the living past!

"There is no apology for this individualization of the conception of history, for it has assisted to unify the various departments of education which are so frequently considered separate—religion, politics, sociology, science, literature. In a university the need is still great for emphasis on the importance of the individual. Man, heir to all that has been, claiming all that is to be, is the real and only unit. Politics is his mode of mass regulation; sociology, his study of his own relations to his fellows; science, his weapon of advance against the frontiers of unacquired knowledge; literature, his graphic record of experience, and religion, his visualization of a constant, unattained good.

“There is a temptation to the student of history, wearied by the technicalities of his work, to approach life more closely than he can do with his books, a temptation to jump out of their pages into the current life around him and study the more accurate, though less decipherable, history to which I have referred—the individual. Such a temptation, coming to the student, is perhaps the greatest sign of successful tutoring. If the teaching of history awakens a warm, eager interest in humanity, it has not failed.

“I have wished, in a fanciful mood, that there existed a separate history book written about every individual who ever lived, telling his total life experience. If one could roam in that vast library he would notice that few of those histories would boast more than a page or two, if only historical data were recorded. But if these individual records went further, if they enumerated and described the events, the thoughts, the perplexities, the struggles, the victories, which seemed great to those forgotten men, then what building on earth would house that library? Yet such a collection of tomes would form the world’s most precious treasure, for such experiences of men and women are the very substance proper of history.

“We are taught wars, revolutions, social and political experiments. We are led by our teachers to believe that these constitute the bases of the subject. This movement or that movement is vaunted as novel or important. But underneath them all lies the insinuating power of individual thought. All are formed by it, promulgated by it, controlled by it. The greatest movement of this century was also the greatest movement of the last century and of all centuries from the very dawn of history—namely, the movement of the individual mind, by struggle, through perplexity, to a greater, simpler life.”

The critical article closed with an optimistic forecast of the book’s popularity, “especially in non-technical circles.”

Mauney had been so engrossed in reading that he did not notice until he finished that Freda MacDowell was standing beside the sofa.

"Hello, there," he said, quickly casting the journal aside. "I didn't see you."

"What do you think about the review?" she asked eagerly.

"Well," he replied, crossing his legs and lighting his cigarette which had gone out. "If you'll sit down a minute I'll tell you."

She accepted his invitation and leaned towards him.

"Isn't it just the dandiest review you ever saw?" she asked. "I've been up in my room just glorying over it."

"It's good," he admitted. "I appreciate the reviewer's decency and I feel like calling you my sister in adventure. You've stuck to me like an Indian, Miss MacDowell. You seemed to—believe in it."

"How could I help it?" she replied. "You managed to express a number of things that had always lain dormant in my own mind. I wanted to say them. But you said them for me."

For a moment or two they sat in silence, half listening to the progress of the game at the table which was now being played with renewed enthusiasm.

"Gertrude told me you got a royal flush," she said at length. "What's that?"

"All kings and queens," he answered, carelessly, then asked: "Did Gertrude wake you up?"

"No. I wasn't asleep."

"She must be a mind-reader."

"Why so?"

"Because, to be frank, I was wishing I could have a little chat with you, but I was afraid you'd gone to bed long ago."

"And I was just simply aching to see you," she answered. "I brought home the literary supplement about eleven o'clock and wanted to show it to you, but she said you had gone to bed. Just how I was going to wait till morning I didn't know."

Another silence fell upon them during which they both watched the intent faces at the table. Mauney was stealing occasional sidelong glimpses of Freda's beautiful profile, and wondering what might be occupying her thoughts. To-night he had more difficulty than ever before in repressing the strong attraction she unconsciously inspired.

"If I had known you'd be here," he said. "I'd have worn—not this dressing gown."

She shook her head and laughed.

"That doesn't make any difference," she said. "I'm enjoying you in your robes. That's one reason I like this place. You don't even have to dress up your thoughts, here."

He was reflecting upon how little personal he had ever been with her. Together they had spent many hours working on the manuscript, in strict detachment, with minds focused on the work in hand. Many times he had felt the urge to break through the delicate shell of reserve, but had refrained, partly because he had wanted to preserve his concentration for literary effort, but mostly because the figure of Max Lee was constantly in the background. He knew that his chum loved Freda MacDowell. He had always taken her

reciprocation of Lee's affection for granted until recently, when he began looking for signs of it.

"But I'm afraid," she said, "that our dear old boarding-house is soon going to become a thing of the past. Everybody seems to be leaving."

Mauney turned in surprise.

"I haven't heard a word about it," he said.

"You knew that Max wasn't so well, didn't you?"

"He looks poorly, but he has never said a word about health to me, lately."

"He's really pretty well all in, I guess. He's leaving in a day or so for Rookland Sanatorium—"

"What! Throwing up his work?"

She nodded.

"The doctor insists on his going at once. It's too bad. Max is such a bright boy. But there's only one thing for him to do."

"You know, Miss MacDowell," Mauney said in a low tone, "Max has never been the same to me since that day when he came home and found you and me starting the book. I've always felt that he was jealous. But we've never mentioned your name."

"It was very foolish of him to feel that way," she replied, with an independent toss of her dark head. "Surely he had no reason or right to be jealous. Max and I have just been friends, nothing more. And even if we had been in love, I would have still had the same interest in your book. Some people weary me. But as I was saying, Max will be leaving. And Freddie and Sadie are going to start housekeeping up in the North End. She's raving about their bungalow and says this boarding house is no place to raise a family."

Mauney laughed.

"It looks as though Gertrude would be left pretty lonely," he remarked.

"Oh, no," corrected Freda, lowering her voice to a whisper, "I haven't told you all yet. This is naturally confidential. But Gertrude and I have become great pals. She seems to like to tell me things. The big joke is that she really isn't a widow."

Mauney's eyes opened in tremendous surprise.

"Where is her husband?"

"He's been living in hotels in Europe," she said, with evident enjoyment of Mauney's astonishment. "He left her because she insisted on keeping up a friendship with another man. Just separated—no divorce. Well, I think seven years of running a boarding-house has more or less broken Gertrude's proud spirit. Manton has been writing her for the past year, trying to resume married relations with her, and she has finally given in. She expects him home in a couple of weeks and I imagine that will be the end of seventy-three. She cried up in my room the other night, real Magdalen tears, and I believe she has learned her lesson."

"I hope she'll be happy," Mauney said. "It's plainly another case of false rebellion. I've been thinking about that a lot lately."

"I know just what you mean," Freda replied. "There's some sort of uppishness about her. She wasn't strong enough to endure the bonds of marriage life—"

"That's it—so she rebelled," interjected Mauney. "But her rebellion was merely the hysterical reaction of an inadequate personality to its environment. Sooner or later with such people there comes some sort of circumstance that proves the falseness of their rebellion. They wilt."

"But on the other hand," continued Freda, with an aspect of some inspiration in her eyes, "there are others who are true rebels. Some of us were made to be perpetually out of gear with things. Our rebellion is genuine. We never turn back. We can't, that's all. I wish you could understand me—"

"I do," he said eagerly, smiling into her eyes. "I understand completely. I can't help feeling that we are in the same boat. I've never yet found any kind of life which completely satisfied me. Take this book of mine. The fun was all in writing it, Freda."

She blushed at the sound of her first name. It had slipped past Mauney's lips, but he saw no reason to apologize.

"Nothing suits me," he continued. "The first part of my life I lived on a farm. Nothing would suit me, but an education. Now I've got it—and—well, it does not satisfy."

He felt great comfort in Freda's presence, greater, more mysterious comfort, than he had ever known before. Most women existed in an unreal atmosphere outside his own immediate consciousness. Most women were elusive phantasies of pure appearance, without content or meaning. But it had so happened that Freda's dark eyes were able to pierce the zone of unreality and stab consciously into his being, even during the first hour of their acquaintance. It had so happened that the seeds of that first encounter found exceedingly fertile soil. His effort to exclude her from his mind had been just as futile as he considered it successful. He was indeed master of his conscious thoughts, but in the reservoirs of his being, this unusual girl had been living an unmolested life, free to come and go,

to commune with him in mysterious, unheard conversations, to mingle her nature with his in hours when his subconscious self had fled with her beyond the limits of recognized experience. It was because this knowledge of her had been entirely buried that he now wondered at the comfort of her actual presence.

They talked on and on, forgetting the others in the room, and forgetting also the late hour. Together they described their common feelings of rebellion against university education. It was not ordained that either of them should realize, just then, how vast a principle underlay their sentiments. Neither of them was to play the role of interpreter to the other, to explain that rebellion was the necessary element of progress, that no man or woman ever changed through the successive metamorphoses of being who did not rebel against existing states. They were far from understanding it all. Mauney, burning with the pent-up indignation of the present hour, and Freda MacDowell, beautiful and vivid with the flush of full-hearted reciprocation. The hours sped. At last the game of poker broke up. At last the true rebels said good-night to each other and retired to sleepless beds.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH MAUNEY CALLS ON THE PROFESSOR.

YOUTH is liable to misconstrue the world and its heterogeneous motives. Being inordinately eager to fulfil its own pressing missions, it is prone to belittle the halting advice of more sedate age, and to battle against every influence seemingly hostile. Youth, with its mental astigmatism, is certain to misjudge situations until it gains the corrective lenses of experience. It is bound to clothe with over-zealous colors all that touches its fate, and to defend itself heroically against encroachment.

Mauney was no exception.

He rose next morning in vast determination to assert the rights of his own personality, feeling that he had been spoon-fed long enough, that the hour had arrived when, not only should he think for himself, but throw out his formative impressions upon a moulding society.

No one will quarrel with him for this, since, even if his impressions were mistaken, a matter for opinion, naturally, his mood upon this spring morning, the twentieth of May, to be exact—was evidently the mood of progress. His pain was the pain of growth. It was the pain of birth. And birth is the moment of discontinuous growth.

“All my ideas are due for a great heart-searching,

a great sifting, a great consolidation. From now no gloom can be injected into the atmosphere without my consent. Nothing is true because some one so states. Truth is what I personally feel, and I feel that, in spite of the disheartening narrowness of logic, in spite of the misanthropic outlook of fossilized intelligence, in spite of all that a university has raised up to alarm my mind, there does exist a cheerful future for my kind, and a great happiness that, far away as it may be, is not quite out of sight."

At ten o'clock Mrs. Manton came to his room to inform him that Freda had telephoned from the university to the effect that he was wanted by Professor Freeman in the history department. He went directly, knowing that now with the term ended and the business of the year settled the department was picking up the threads of its autumn work. He was to be initiated into his new duties as a lecturer in history. It was for this professorial interview that he had been patiently waiting. He went quickly, with light steps, down Franklin Street, with eager steps through the great university square where, as he reflected, he had stood five years ago, a raw, country boy, overcome by the aspect of the seat of learning. Much had taken place. Patiently he had sat beneath the illumination of the immortal lamp of knowledge, charmed by its radiations, lulled into a mood of mental delectation. How often during these years he had crossed these cinder paths, going eagerly to his history classes, in the fanciful delusion that God had created a tremendously interesting world for no other purpose than that students might glory in their investigations thereof. It had been a necessary part of life perhaps, but it was all passed

now. "What an innocent dream!" he pondered. "How unrecking of the dire forces of good and ill that rule the world, how delightfully blind to actual existence, how elysian, how stupidly brilliant, how sagely detached!"

But here before him was life. Here was his Alma Mater—the great stone house, that like a mother took her children to her breast. Within this mysterious edifice, what quiet whispers of the restful mother did they hear and cherish! To-day they came in, children with plastic minds. To-morrow they went out, citizens of the world, living men and women who must change the world. Ah, this was life! He almost paused as he entered the Gothic portal, with fear of his new responsibilities, with reverence for his high calling, with fear of life.

The rotunda was dusky with filtered light from the stained-glass window above the landing of the dignified walnut staircase, and duskier with its high, dark-panelled walls. No one was there—the customary spring desertion. But, in imagination, there were innumerable hushed whispers, thick in the atmosphere, like an overflow from the dead years of lecturing, which, even now, came back to life once more.

He passed down the dark corridor, lighted by old-fashioned, carbon lamps, with its dull-green mosaic floor, its huge walnut doors closed upon empty lecture rooms. From the open transoms came the imaginary whispers again. He shivered with thoughts of their poignant symbolism. At the end of the long hall, where he turned toward the wing, stood a marble bust of Homer, with heavy, sightless eyes. Above him hung a cracked oil painting of some particularly emaciated celebrity, who had the appearance of peeking timidly

above the rim of his high, white collar, to see who, in this quiet, deserted hour, might be disturbing the century-old solitude with his echoing footsteps.

Up the few, worn, stone steps he climbed to the office door of the department of history. Inside he found only Freda, seated as usual, behind her flat-topped-desk. He glanced about to make sure they were alone. Two mullioned windows on either side let in the dull daylight. There were chairs, and shelves of documents, and the broom of a janitor whose labors has been interrupted. A door on the inner wall stood ajar, but there was no sound.

He came quickly toward her and covered her right hand with his own as it lay upon the desk.

"It's good to see you, to-day, Freda," he said. "I—"

"S-sh!" she said softly, putting her finger against her lips and nodding her head towards the door behind her.

"Professor Freeman has sent for you, Mr. Bard," she said aloud, in a most formal tone, the meanwhile returning the ardent pressure of his hand, and acquiring a sudden complexion. "If you will be seated, please, I will see if he is ready for you."

"Oh, I say, Miss MacDowell," came a voice from the inner room, "Dr. Freeman has gone over to his house. I imagine he'll be back soon."

"Thank you, Mr. Hennigar," she said politely, but with a grimace toward the crack in the door.

"Not at all," he replied, in his English accent, in his unforgettable voice of harsh, bubbling overtones. "I say, Miss MacDowell, did you see anything of those dashed first year exam. books?"

"They're all here," she replied indifferently. "Any time you want them."

Nutbrown Hennigar opened the door and gave Mauney a quick, direct stare from his intensely black eyes. He had never lectured to Mauney and had forgotten meeting him at the de Freville dinner.

"May I introduce Mr. Bard—Mr. Hennigar," said Freda politely.

Hennigar advanced suddenly, in his characteristic abrupt and shuffling way.

"How d'juh do!" he said briefly, taking Mauney's hand, and then dropping it as if it were hot. "Mr. Bard? Why, of course, how stupid of me!" he said, pushing his bone-rimmed, nose spectacles further down toward the point of his nose, and pulling at a black ribbon that tethered them around the base of his collar. "I understand you are joining our staff."

"Yes," smiled Mauney. "I have been given the opportunity and naturally consider it a good one."

"Oh, *rather!*" coughed Hennigar, with emphasis, as he took a blue, silk handkerchief from its concealed position in his coat sleeve. "It's really awfully good. By the way, I have the honor to be conversing with an author, if I'm not mistaken. I have read your book, Mr. Bard."

"You did me an honor, Mr. Hennigar."

"Oh no, not that," he said. "It was really awfully well done. Accept my congratulations. Well, I hope you like it here, and all that. It's not a bad place, you know. I needn't express how glad we are to have you with us. That goes without saying, of course."

He swung his left arm up in front of his face and glanced at his wrist watch.

"And now," he said, backing slowly toward the door, "I have an engagement with a beastly dentist and know you'll excuse me."

With a very full, but evanescent exposure of his very white teeth he nodded his head and disappeared, slamming the door.

"The miserable little dog," whispered Freda, her face flushed. "Just cur enough to fawn. He hates you, Mauney, like sin. He asked me this morning if I had read your book. I told him I had and that I considered it a young masterpiece. He didn't like me to say that. He's one of the poorest sports in Merlton. I'd just love to push my finger right into his eyes."

"Freda!"

"You're shocked! Well, I'll bet you'll feel the same way after you've been here a year or so. Sit down and rest your bones. Professor Freeman will be along soon."

Before he could accept her invitation a heavy, energetic step was heard outside the office. The door opened and Dr. Alfred K. Tanner's familiar form bustled in. He was, as usual, entirely occupied with his busy thoughts and proceeded straight to Freda's desk without noticing Mauney.

"Miss MacDowell," he said, in a low, intense tone, leaning over the desk and pointing his plump forefinger toward the window as if he was about to refer to the dust that adhered to the panes of glass. "Have you had time to make out that list yet?"

"Which list, Dr. Tanner?"

"The pass marks in ancient history. The pass marks, I mentioned yesterday. The pass marks, Miss MacDowell."

"No, not yet."

"I see—not yet," he repeated, straightening up and pressing his little finger nail between his lips. For a moment he seemed on the verge of decision. Then, bending forward again he pointed toward the window.

"Listen, Miss MacDowell," he said in a very loud tone. "Delay it. Delay it. I may not want them, you see? I may not want them. No. I may amalgamate the pass marks in one lump, Miss MacDowell."

Then he lowered his voice again.

"You can keep them here, can't you?"

"Yes, Dr. Tanner."

"Bully! You keep them here, Miss MacDowell, I may amalgamate them."

As he turned to leave the office, he noticed Mauney.

"Hello, there, Mauney Bard," he said, pausing. "How are you?"

"Fine, Professor, thank you," he smiled.

"Did you beat Lorna on the spring exams?"

"No, sir, she defeated me as usual."

Tanner laughed whole-heartedly.

"Oh—ha! She defeated you as usual. Of course, she did. Very clever girl, Lorna. Of course, she defeated you."

His expression changed.

"Oh yes!" he reminded himself, "I want to see you, Mauney Bard. Have you got say five minutes to spare?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Bully! Come with me."

He led Mauney to his office upstairs. Indicating a chair for Mauney he sat down behind his own desk and leaned forward.

"Now, look," he said, "I want you to understand that I'm in a most friendly mood. You understand that, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Mauney, intensely curious.

"Good! I'm really in a *most* friendly mood. The professor has already told me that you have joined the staff. I would congratulate you on joining the staff except that I consider it unnecessary. I am glad you have come to us. You are, now, more or less, one of us. I don't congratulate you, but I welcome you. You are one of us, more or less."

He sat back in his chair and preserved a short silence.

"Now this isn't any too pleasant a mission," he declared, shaking his head, as if Mauney had said it was pleasant. "I—I feel that, as a senior member of the staff I should take you under my wing, more or less. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now here's what I'm coming to," he continued. "You must regard what I say as confidential, unusually confidential. Yes, I know you will. I don't need to ask. *Very* confidential. It would seem that Professor Freeman is considerably offended with you."

"Me!" exclaimed Mauney. "Are you sure, sir?"

"Yes—I'm sure—I'm very uncomfortably sure, Mr. Bard. Now, possess yourself in quietness and I shall try to make it clear to you—as it is clear to me—why the professor should be so offended. I, of course, would not bother telling you, unless, as you may haply surmise, I am moderately interested in your welfare in our department. I imagine he will send for you in a few days."

"He sent for me this morning!" Mauney interjected.

"Indeed—and did he? Well, I'm not astonished. I was talking with him this morning and I may say that considering everything, such, for example, as your pleasant relationship to the family, if I may refer to that, in passing, and considering, too, that your record has been a good one, I say I was taken somewhat by surprise at his attitude. It has reference, of course, to your book on the teaching of history."

"My book—why!" stammered Mauney, quite pale. "You mean he objects to what I said in it?"

"More or less, Mr. Bard. He feels that, as a member of the staff, you were ill-advised in publishing a book which criticizes the methods of the staff."

"But I wrote it and published it before I became a member of the staff," Mauney objected.

"No doubt about that," Tanner agreed. "I reminded the professor of that. The fact, in itself, excuses you. But no fact, as it would seem, can excuse the result. Now, I am *most* friendly, Mr. Bard, and am merely trying to give you the situation. I am not stating any personal convictions. In one sense, my position denies me the right to do so. In such an instance, I really think that criticism is helpful, from whatever source it may come. I really think that the university, while doubtlessly far from perfect, has, at least, attained a degree of dignity where it does not need to fear, but should welcome criticism. I have read your book and I am quite frank in saying that it has many splendid points. But here's the great difficulty. We have been trying to run the university under grave disadvantages. Public sentiment is not always as helpful and kindly as we might wish. Hence, we deprecate criticism which is open and militant. However,

from your standpoint, Mr. Bard, the problem is to face the professor, with as good a grace as you can command, and, now that you know the situation, I think you will be better prepared."

Mauney sat staring at the mullioned windows with the unpleasant feeling of a criminal being prepared by a minister for the death sentence. This room was the death-cell, Freeman's office was to be the death-chamber. He had committed a heinous offence. He could not put off the superimposed sense of guilt that breathed to him from Tanner's manner and from the ominous quietness of the room. He told Tanner that he appreciated his confidential talk and that he was now "quite prepared" for the interview with the professor, while Tanner seemed to be struck by a defiant note in his reply.

A few minutes later Mauney knocked on the professor's door, having learned from Freda that he had returned.

"Come," said the well-known and pleasant voice.

Mauney found him seated in a Morris chair with a book on his knee, a pipe in his hand—picture of unruffled serenity. It was the first time Mauney had been in the dignified official precincts of the departmental head, but he could have described the room, so characteristic was it of the occupant. A simple desk bereft of all paraphernalia save a ruler, a blotter and an ash-tray. A wall with two cases of monotonously colored volumes, and between the cases, an empty grate. It was severely simple, just like Freeman, whose smile to-day was as hospitable as ever, as kindly as ever, as cruel as ever.

"Well, Mauney!" he said, as if no atmosphere of dis-

pleasure were being contemplated. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you, Professor."

He accepted the only other chair in the room and avoided Freeman's keen, grey eyes. He noticed that the historian's long dextrous hand was playing with the ornaments of his chair-arm and that his eyes, whenever he glanced at them, seemed full of racing plans.

"I sent for you, Mauney, for two reasons," he said, gently, so gently that Mauney, for a moment, thought Tanner had made a mistake. "In the first place I wanted to mention your book, which I have here in my hand and which I am reading with interest. Are you in a hurry?"

"I have nothing to do, Professor," said Mauney, more at ease by reason of Freeman's polite deference.

"You say here, somewhere—oh yes, here's the place," continued Freeman, fondling the pages and quoting a passage. "'History must cease to be a subject for the five-finger exercises of defunct mentalities, and become rather the earnest objective of men who are in tune with the issues of current society. It must cease to be the property of an elite academic dispensing agency, and become the property of those, who, valuing form less than substance, will not so much dispense it as interpret it. It must be rescued from fossilization, as every branch of learning requires, at times, to be rescued.'"

Freeman closed the book gently and laid it on the arm of his chair.

"Do you really believe what you have written, Mauney?" he asked.

"I really do, Professor," the young man replied, determinedly.

"Then we can better discuss it, knowing that you are sincere. In the first place, why do you feel as you do?"

"Because, since the first day I came to college, I have been confronted by this cut-and-dried, academic spirit which, to me at least, acts like poison."

"You mean that, here in our department, there is a spirit, on the part of the tutors, which is disagreeable to you?"

"Yes, sir. But, of course, I made no reference to any university in particular."

"I know. But, nevertheless, you gained the impression here?"

"Yes."

"That is extremely unfortunate," said Freeman, in a tone of real sincerity. "Of course, as you must realize, your book, in places, assumes an attitude of frank rebellion, and, whether or not you would have written it had you known you were coming on the staff, the appearance is nevertheless equally as ridiculous. You see what I'm driving at?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, I don't want you to be jeered at by the public. I want you to preserve your dignity as much as you can. I dare say your book will not actually have much practical effect on teaching, since it was written rather as a semi-philosophical treatise. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"But at the same time, Mauney, having written it, you will see how illogical your appearance on a history staff becomes."

Enmeshed in Freeman's subtle argument, with its pretence of deferential consideration, Mauney burned with sudden indignation.

"There's just one solution," he said rising, and now facing the professor frankly. "I've put my foot in it. I've criticized the university. I've committed the unpardonable sin and must abide by the consequences. I reiterate, without any bluff, sir, that I have suffered from the dampening influence which kills youthful enthusiasm. I've dared to believe in what I might term a bright human future. I've dared to contradict and defy the cold, pessimistic viewpoint to which I have been exposed. Many a boy comes to college full of ardent belief in the fundamental goodness of things, but few are strong enough to wade through the marsh of brilliant tutoring which believes in nothing. I have been strong enough to wade through, Professor, and I am strong enough now to offer you, most respectfully, my resignation from your staff."

Mauney started toward the door.

"A moment, please," said Freeman, turning in his chair. "I think your resignation is the most logical thing you could give me, because, otherwise, your own position—"

"Please, Professor," he interrupted, "don't let us be fog the situation. You wanted my resignation. You have it, sir. And let me assure you that I hold no personal spite. On the contrary I appreciate to the very limit your many kindnesses to me. There is nothing personal, Dr. Freeman, in all this. It's principle, and I regret that even a principle should separate us. Was there anything further, sir?"

"No," said Freeman softly, with a gentle smile on his lips. "I think that's all."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOOL.

AT noon, Mauney was too upset to eat dinner. He wanted to talk to Freda and went upstairs to wait in the alcove, until she should come up. While he sat stolidly in one of the chairs behind the little desk, he occupied himself with turning through the pages of a book whose title or contents he did not so much as notice, and in gazing through the window at the street, busy with noontide pedestrians. He had come straight home from his meeting with Freeman, sad and angry and totally impatient. He knew that only one sedative existed, that only one friend remained to hear his story of personal woe. He would wait for her.

And while he waited he tried to think, in the distracted mood of the moment, what he would do. He had been building upon a foundation, now suddenly gone. There was nothing—nothing.

Maxwell Lee came out of his room and paused at the sight of him.

“Hello, Mauney,” he said, a little more affably than had been his recent wont.

“Hello, Max.”

“What’s the matter?” asked Lee.

“I’m worried a little. I’ve got into the habit lately.

Sit down and have a smoke. What the devil's come over you, Max?"

"Why, nothing, you poor fish," said Lee, taking the other chair. "What's come over *you*?"

"Nothing much. Only I'm just in a mood to get this settled."

"Get what settled?"

"Well, confound it, Max, don't profess such ignorance. You know we haven't been on our old terms for months and months. I'm going away soon—somewhere, and I don't see why we should not part good friends."

"There's no reason in the world, Mauney."

Neither of them thought of smoking, however.

"Yes there is, Max. Let's be frank."

"All right. Let's."

"I hate to talk this way to you, Max. I know you're not well."

Lee's eyes narrowed as his glance shifted from the window to Mauney's face, but he said nothing.

"I could never talk this way," Mauney continued, "except that I could talk to anybody, just now. We used to be pretty good pals, but that's apparently over. We both know why, but neither of us will admit it. There's a woman behind it. No need to mention names. You told me you loved her."

"Well, what about it?" asked Lee.

"Just this—that I love her, too."

"I knew that," he said simply, playing a tattoo on the top of the desk. "I knew that long ago. It's no secret and, well, I suppose she knows you love her, eh?"

"Not yet. But she's going to be told. I hate doing anything underhanded." Mauney paused to look search-

ingly at the thin, wistful face of his friend. "What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"Why, nothing at all. What did you think I would do—try to murder you?"

Lee rose slowly and put his foot on the chair to tie his shoe-string. Mauney saw his thin, white hands, thinner and whiter than a month ago, tremble as he fumbled the knot.

"Why, no," he said, straightening himself up. "I'm not going to do anything about it. I'm the loser, that's all. I'm not morbid about it. It's a losing game all along the line with me. But I have no fear—none whatever. That's what I can't understand."

Mauney knew that Lee was thinking of death. There was death written on his pale face, whose cheeks had become more concave than before. His eyes burned with a fire too bright for normal fuel to have kindled. And Mauney's bosom burned with pity that he could not have mentioned for worlds, for he felt that he must treat Lee as if he were strong. He would have given anything to be delivered from the necessity.

"Well, Max, old fellow," he made himself say. "I'm glad I told you this. I feel better now."

For an instant the old whimsical smile played on Lee's lips.

"That's all right," he said. "That's all right, Mauney, my son, I—I guess I'll have to be going along."

When Lee had descended the stairs, Mauney buried his face in his hands. It hurt. He knew that life was wringing the last drop of courage from Lee's heart. From the window he saw him walking slowly up the street—Lee, the frail body, the heroic mind.

"Am I going to win?" he asked himself. "How it will hurt to win! Is victory always to the strong?"

Presently, Freda came up the stairs, and walked quickly along the hall.

"Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed, stopping. "Did you get through with Freeman?"

"I did indeed," he replied seriously. "I'm through with the history department."

"What!"

"Don't ask me to explain now. I resigned, and I'm glad I did. Please don't hurry away. I want to talk with you."

He pulled the chair out for her.

"You must excuse my abruptness, Freda," he continued. "But I've got to talk with you."

"What is wrong?" she enquired seriously.

"Just everything. I'm all up in arms against the universe, I think."

Life looked dark. He had thrown over, in his rebellion, the helpfulness of Freeman's friendship. Vaguely he knew that the solution of his troubles lay in getting down to work, some sort of helpful work. But this was not the only ray of light that began to penetrate.

He had no idea how he should broach the subject that was torturing him. He loved her dark eyes and her lips that tenderly tried to understand his mood. She had been in his deep heart for months. He was at a loss to know how to begin. He glanced at the window as if the bald light of the dull May noon were an intruder. He listened to laughter from downstairs as if it conspired to hinder him.

"Freda," he said, pressing her hand as it lay on the

desk. "I love you. I've been wanting to tell you this for a long time."

Her serious face did not disappoint him. It quivered into exquisite understanding that brought fine rims of moisture to her eyes. Mauney could not continue, for the memory of Lee was making him sad.

"I'm going away somewhere, Freda," he said presently. I don't know where, but I'm through with Merlton. I've got to find my niche. I've got to go away from you, too. Please, try to understand how hard it is to go."

Her eyes softened.

"I think I understand," she answered, quietly.

"Perhaps," he said, with a far-away look in his eyes, "perhaps I'm a fool. You can't know how I feel about you. But Lee—he loves you and needs you—and I can't help caring. Why am I such a fool?"

Freda gently released her hand from Mauney's, and, rising, walked slowly down the hall towards her room. On entering it, she closed the door and sank down upon her knees beside a big chair and deliberately rested her face upon her arms. She was not weeping or praying. Seldom did she do either. Her intense mind was engaged with Mauney Bard. He did not know that he was being pierced with arrows of shrewd analysis, that he was being tried in the fires of a woman's relentless gauging. Nor did he see her serene face presently lifted to the warm sunlight that flooded from her window. Her features wore a new restfulness, for she had found the beautiful answer to her thoughts. Delicately the balances of her justice had tipped, to find Mauney not a fool.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST DAYS AT FRANKLIN STREET.

FREDA MacDowell was one of the most remarked women who had attended the University of Merlton in recent years. First as a student, then as a departmental secretary, she had left behind her a definite impression on the unchanging portion of the college—the faculty. Occasionally a student does this, but never by academic prowess. The brilliant scholar passes through his four years with lustre of a kind, but is soon swallowed up in the oblivion of the graduate status. The remembered student betrays, even in those budding years, a definite mould of mind, illustrates a definite viewpoint and adheres to the peculiar details of conduct that mark a distinct personality.

Freda possessed some unaccountable leverage on life that bestowed this distinction. She was just a little mysterious. No one knew why she had come upon the college world, from the very start, as a rebel, fortified capably against the acknowledged virtues of a university. Books were proclaimed a burden, lectures and classes were boring. Girl associates freely disagreed with her and disliked her. But on attempting to engage her in altercation they discovered a handful of unanswerable arguments. Freda's tenets were never

flippant. On the surface they sometimes appeared even affected yet were found to be based on carefully-digested opinion.

She never ventured on speculative problems. She followed her own injunction: "Open your eyes and look at life." In so doing she ran the risk of the realist. Life, too closely inspected, often seems monstrous.

Beneath Freda's animation and apparent flippancy, reposed a silent and very solemn tribunal before which everything of importance had to be arraigned. Themes of elemental justice, of human motives, and of the obscured relation of cause and effect—these she dwelt upon. Few people knew what a sage she was, in secret. Few were permitted to see past her bright face.

At Merlton, no university student, caring so little for the customary rewards of education, had received as much interest from the teachers. Most of the professors had a tender spot in their hearts for her. This may have depended, in no little measure, upon her personal beauty, for decades of mental acquisition do not alter a man's response, and a good-looking woman maintains her authority even in the sedate courts of learning. Then, too, a realist who has smashed her way through the brambles wins a sharp simplicity that is bound to attract all enemies of delusion. Professor Freeman pendulated between admiration of her mental courage and curiosity about her flippancy. François de Freville gloried in his "Oiseau," without stint. Alfred K. Tanner loved her, but the great-hearted gentleman loved nearly everybody, so that it was never noticeable. Nutbrown Hennigar had started with the emotionless, but level-headed idea that Freda was sufficiently ornamental to grace his distinguished presence

on most social occasions and had arrived at a point where he believed that she should be a permanent ornament in his home. All these people composed the fringe of her existence. She took none of them seriously, but derived a paltry pleasure from the flattery to her vanity.

A little nearer was Maxwell Lee—so much like her in many ways, a good chum, clever, sincere and respected. But he did not awake any amorous response in Freda.

Thus she had continued to play with life, superficially gay, but actually discontented. The only man who had ever believed in her was Mauney Bard. He saw beneath the surface. This, at least, was how she felt on the day following his ardent declarations.

Another college term was finished. Spring and the vacation were at hand. But she knew no eagerness, as in other years, to be off to her home in Lockwood. The morning was occupied in arranging her secretarial desk for the summer's absence and the afternoon in quiet day-dreams in her room on Franklin Street.

Her opened window, beside which she lounged in her big Morris chair, let in a heterogeneous clatter of carts and horses' hoofs, the constant, shrill voices of romping children and the distant melodies of an organ-grinder from a neighboring block, the brisk movements of the Rigoletto, and the long, rolling chords of the Aloha. It was a very satisfactory occupation to sit passively by her window. Beyond and beneath the noise and the music there was a sweet silence of new happiness within her. And her eyes were not seeing the familiar objects of the room, but feasting upon the fresh, open face of Mauney Bard. Out of the air, his

clear blue eyes looked into hers. She heard his voice laughing. She saw his eyes, boyish and eager, light with their happy laughter.

After a time she glanced toward her wardrobe and rose impulsively to dress for dinner. While she was finishing the ceremony of donning a new evening dress of rose silk the door opened quietly to admit Gertrude who, after a glance at her bowed smilingly.

"Ah-ha!" she said, very softly, "Doing it *a la grande*, are you?"

"Gertrude," said Freda, "see if you can get this fastened, will you?"

"I shall be pleased, my dear," responded the landlady, coming close, "to help you with so charming a frock. Why a dome-fastener should be placed in such an inaccessible position puzzles me considerably. Don't you want your hair waved a little?"

"Have you really got time to do it up for me?" Freda eagerly asked.

"Sit down, my dear," purred Mrs. Manton as she placed a towel over Freda's shoulders and began extracting hairpins. "What a respectable wad you really have. One could do wonders with half of it. Shall I give you that Paris touch I used once before?"

Freda nodded, "Uh, huh! Won't it be grand?"

"Doubtless," said Mrs. Manton. "But in the words of Shakespeare, What's the big idea? Going out for dinner?"

"No."

"Expecting Mr. Nutbrown Hennigar?"

"No."

"Pure vanity, I suppose, then."

"You haven't guessed yet, Gertrude."

"You're a poor person to risk guesses about," admitted Mrs. Manton, "So you may have the fun of telling me."

"Well, then," said Freda, "I'm in love."

"In love, my dear!" exclaimed the landlady, "With what?"

"A man, Gertrude."

"Never!" Mrs. Manton shook her head slowly as she stepped in front of Freda to inspect the results of her handicraft. "Do tell me what it's like," she implored.

"Well," said Freda, "you admire the man's style from the first—his voice, his looks. His boots are polished. His fingernails are clean, and not polished. His tie is carefully knotted, his trousers well in press. You like him, but you're not in love yet."

"I should say, not yet," Gertrude agreed, half cynically.

"Then, whenever you talk with him he has a faculty of understanding you. You don't have to repeat or explain, Gertrude. You've always wanted to talk with people who *get* you. Isn't that right?"

"It's as sure as mud."

"And then," continued Freda enthusiastically. "It works the other way, too. You find it easy to understand him. His broadcasting machine is in the same wave-length as your radio-receiver. But even then you're not in love."

"Are you quite sure?" enquired Mrs. Manton, teasingly.

"Yes. Listen, Gertrude, to me!" Freda said, as she rose to look down into the sombre face before her. "There are all kinds of attractions and fascinations

and mesmerisms that pass for love. But when you have known your man for a long time and feel you can hang on him, trust him, let him steer you, and just want to be right with him all the time— isn't that love?"

"It sounds suspiciously like it," smiled Mrs. Manton.

"But you're not taking me seriously," Freda objected.

"What do you want me to do—weep? Oh, girl, I could deliver one of the finest speeches on this subject that ever was heard." Mrs. Manton spoke with decided emphasis, and pointed toward Freda admonishingly. "Remember, my dear, that no man lives that can understand a woman's nature. They can't vibrate with us. Good or bad, they don't need us. Mind you, they think they do. But when the curtain is lifted on the mystery, their fine frenzy dies. What do we do then? We wash dishes three times a day, and listen to a voice in the kitchen fire to find out when they will return to the glorious delirium of their first affections. Then we grow restless. We are off up toward the sky. Then we whizz plumb down like an aeroplane in a nose-dive. We don't know why we do the things we do. We are in ignorance as to why our love makes us hurt them. In short we are women. They are only men. And a satisfied woman is the rarest work of God!"

During the evening Gertrude gathered her little flock together in the dining room and provided music, dancing and refreshments, as a function in honor of Maxwell Lee's departure. Not a word was said about his condition. It was all as if nothing had happened. Freda was informed quietly by Mrs. Manton that Mauney was going to Rookland with Max on the morrow and was providing money for his better care while in the

sanatorium. He had at first refused his kindly offer, but had finally been persuaded, after three hours' argument, to accept it. The party broke up early and Freda, after assisting her landlady to wash the dishes, joined Mauney in the drawing room.

It was a rarely happy hour. Freda, accustomed to orthodox methods of love-making, was genuinely refreshed by Mauney's restraint. Her presence brought a happiness that he could not disguise. It shone in his face. Most men would have told her, of course, that she was looking very beautiful to-night. His omission of the compliment she readily explained by reason of his essentially undemonstrative disposition. Freda, always dramatic by nature, expressed her own feelings by gathering herself neatly upon a cushion at his feet. Mauney sat leaning forward, his arms on his knees, looking down into her face. He scarcely appreciated the real surrender typified by that lowly cushion. But he knew and she knew that a delicious, quivering kind of peace was in the room with them. They talked of many matters for a time.

"If I had *you*," he said, seriously, at length, "everything would be perfect. I wouldn't care what happened—"

Her head turned thoughtfully away for a moment, but he soon lifted her face with a finger under her chin.

"Try to *get* me, won't you?" he implored. "Try to put yourself in my position. Lee has been the whitest chap to me that ever was. Behind my back as well as to my face. If he had only ever done me one little, mean trick—but he hasn't. Can you see what a damned predicament I'm in?"

"Yes," she replied quickly, with an understanding

smile that revealed a white gleam between her lips. "I can see it, plain as the paper on that ceiling."

Mauney whistled softly a snatch of an indefinite tune and made some pretence of keeping time with his heel, while he stared unhappily at the carpet.

"It's not very nice to be me," he said.

"It's your predicament, boy," she said, "I'm sure you're able to settle it somehow or other."

Later, when Freda had gone to her room, she was glad that *her* lover had a hard problem to solve. She was glad that *her* lover was capable of such an unusual fidelity; for her innate casuistry had been busy on the situation and had shown her that such a man would make a faithful husband.

BOOK IV.
THIN SOIL

CHAPTER I.

CONVOCATION.

FREDA returned to her home in Lockwood, advising Mauney to try for a position on the Lockwood Collegiate staff. She told him that the town had its faults, but her father, who was mayor, would be able to help him get the situation. He wrote and applied, and was informed by return mail that he would be considered in due course. Meanwhile he waited in Merlton for Convocation, to receive his academic degree.

Convocation was an impressive function—the great assembly hall filled with begowned and mortar-boarded seniors, and with their admiring relatives and friends; the broad platform crowded with the professors wearing their multi-colored gowns, while rich organ music shook like a solemn presence through the huge auditorium. After the presentation of the diplomas, Richard Garnett, the President, made a short address.

“You are going forth,” he said, “to sow in other soils the seeds you have gathered here.”

The majesty of a university president lends his words an authoritative dignity suitable to such a solemn occasion. The graduate, pausing on the threshold of the world, finds a grandeur in this farewell address. He becomes inspired to catch the ideal. It is he who must carry forth the light. He, and his fellows

beside him in the hall, are to be the torch bearers. It is an exquisite moment before the Chancellor's "*Convocatio dimissa est*" and the final thunder of the pipe organ as they step forth, citizens of the world.

Mauney took heart again. Denied a position on the university staff, he thought now of those "other soils" where he was needed even more. It would have been pleasant to remain in Merlton, adding his moiety of effort to the distinguished total of a renowned university. In time it might have brought fame. But the ideals of Christianity had been rife during the past four years. No man could go through Merlton without learning that nobility of character lay in service to humanity. The courageous, educational formula of Garnett was responsible for this leaven. It deserved as much praise and received as much as unspectacular courage ever does. A thousand men scoffed at Garnett as a visionary. A thousand fawned upon him for personal reasons. A hundred knew him. There were many thoughtless individuals ready to teach him his function. But there were many also who left Merlton each year inflamed by his idealism and determined to serve humanity's needs. Garnett might have considered this a tribute much deeper than praise.

CHAPTER II.

LOCKWOOD.

"It is impossible, in our condition of society, not to be sometimes a snob."—Thackeray's Book of Snobs.

LOCKWOOD had been called "The Garden of Upper Canada." This designation, which scarcely over-rated the beauty of the town, originated in the private correspondence of some of its earliest inhabitants. They were discerning people, mostly United Empire Loyalists, who, more than a century since, had selected it for its placid outlook. At Lockwood's very feet moved the majestic St. Lawrence, that river of rivers. Behind it stood the thick forests of an unexplored hinterland inhabited by deer, bear and cariboo. Through the town, later on, trailed the long York Road with its stage-coaches.

A political friend of John Beverley Robinson had written in a letter: "I have built a home in Lockwood and here with Bessie (his wife), I hope to remain. My house stands on a cliff beside the river. We are almost surrounded by a small forest of pines—cozy and contented and away from the hot-heads."

That Lockwood should have been chosen by aristocratic members of the Family Compact was not strange, for it furnished these worthy gentlemen with everything

they might desire—boating, hunting, and above all, release from the trials of politics. "The Garden of Upper Canada" became an almost exclusive colony for the faithful adherents of Governors-General. They built themselves substantial residences, and founded a picturesque local society. They were the determined rulers of the state, the ultra-Loyalists, the enemies of Mackenzie, brothers in a just and elevated cause. Lockwood in all its beauty was theirs. Lockwood, in spite of its citizens of a different political faith, was solely theirs. They were the suffering, but anointed minority, and the democrats could like it or leave it.

The wealth and high influence of these early settlers gave Lockwood an aristocratic flavor which never quite left it. Their motto, "Keep down the underbrush," still persisted; although the underbrush, a century later, constituted the prevailing vegetation. The original, exclusive set had long since either sailed for England in disgust at democracy's progress, or died out. But scions of that early patrician strain remained. Their homes on Queen Street East were, in many cases, the very houses in which the Loyalists had gathered about friendly fireplaces to discuss death to the hot-heads, and "jobbery and snobbery," for themselves. And even at the present time such fireside discussions were not unknown.

Freda MacDowell's mother had been a Smith, a name adorned by aristocratic associations. Her great-grandfather had been a full colonel in the British army, active in the Rebellion of '37, and one of the Family Compact group, who had settled in Lockwood. Mrs. MacDowell could never forget that she had been a Smith, for there were several things to remind her.

The house on Queen Street East, where she lived with her husband, George MacDowell, was a very tangible token of her distinguished descent, and her excellent social rating in Lockwood—in spite of present poverty—was an equally pleasant reminder.

The large, square house finished in genuine stucco had aged to as rich a brown as an old meerschaum pipe. From the street only glimpses could be had through a thick screen of pines that filled the grounds and above a high stone wall that rose like the warding hand of the very Smiths, saying to the modern hot-heads and modern rabble: "Thus far, but no further may you come." At one corner a large gate opened through the wall and a gravel road wound gracefully across the lawn to the house. On closer inspection the building was seen to be quite large, with its verandahed front facing westward, and a deeper verandah on its south side towards the river. As disdainfully as its original owners, it turned its back on the town to look away upon the river, where flowed that majestic peace and solace; while it retained its servant quarters (a long, low wing used now as a garage), next to the street. The southern verandah commanded a remarkable vista of the St. Lawrence, a cool, blue expanse, rimmed by the grey shore of the United States in the distance, and accentuated by a foreground of unhusbanded table-land, which stopped abruptly fifty feet above the water. Wooden steps had been engineered down the precipitous face of the cliff to the boathouse, a white frame building that rested on concrete walls.

The old Smith residence had nothing of the ostentatious magnificence characterizing the homes on either side of it. The latter belonged respectively to the Court-

neys and the Beechers. By their ponderous architecture, their elaborate lawns, their marble statues, they stood forth, self-conscious, but awe-inspiring, to emphasize the plainness of their neighbor. But the older home was well-secluded behind the stone wall and pine grove, caring very little for opulent display. The Smith virtue had been blood. The Beechers and Courtneys were *new* people, who had arrived by wealth. The old aristocracy was rapidly disappearing, and being replaced by a cheap plutocracy—people unknown fifty years ago, who now sought to appropriate and maintain the customs, the very traditions and feelings of the older families.

At present the name "Courtney" and "Beecher" headed Lockwood's social list. Both families were tremendously wealthy, and hated each other for that very reason. Edward Courtney, senior, who now slept with his fathers after a career doubtlessly tiring, had made his millions in Western Canada at a time when property was a golden investment. He had been a genial, big fellow of simple tastes, but with a sworn fidelity to the game of money-making. It was the game that interested him. At the stage in his career at which most men would have begun taking out life-insurance to cover loss from succession-dues he had started investing earnestly in steel, grain, and what not! Before he died, almost every important industry in Canada was, in some degree, dependent upon him.

Beecher, likewise, dead, had amassed his fortune by a unique combination of common sense and economy. On surveying fields of enterprise at the time of his young manhood, he could see that perfumes constituted not a luxury, but a basic necessity. North America might eventually stop burning coal, but would never

demand less, but always more, of the toilet article in question. He became personally an expert perfumer; by the use of French names and phrases he cast over his wares the glamor of a foreign atmosphere and gained a wide market by attractive advertising. This we may term common sense. But Beecher's economy was parsimony; it was insane fear of poverty. On his death-bed the favorite emotion of his life surged uppermost, and, (it was said), he ordered the light turned off to save power!

Probably, if these two millionaires could have seen the petty feud between their surviving families, Courtney would have laughed at its foolishness and Beecher have snarled at the expense. It cost money thus to vie with each other. A new yacht or motor car for one meant a new yacht or car for the other. If the social columns issued bulletins regarding one family's journeyings in Europe the rival family were not going to be quietly at home in Lockwood to discuss those glowing items. It was funny. But Lockwood was too obsequious to see the fun of it, too busy seeking favor to dare laugh. Colonel Smith, could he have beheld it, would have scorned it with real Family Compact scorn, and perhaps Mrs. George MacDowell, scion of her departed class, may have had promptings to contempt. Unfortunately she could not afford to heed such promptings. The new plutocracy had usurped the reins of social power. Here she was, wedged in between the Beechers and the Courtneys, accepted on good terms as long as she maintained the old Smith house. But she knew that, hard as it was to keep the place up, her only safe course was to do so. The old aristocracy now found it necessary to battle for position, and their

chief weapon was a home on Queen Street East. Those who, by the reason of very limited means, had found it needful to move from this exclusive residential section had very gradually been forgotten.

Mrs. MacDowell resembled her daughter in appearance, save in her coloring. She had the same incisive features, arched nose and expressive lips, and the same half-defiant tilt of the head. But she was a pronounced blond, and her grey-blue eyes were coldly critical. Her mouth had the suggestion of vast, but well-tempered bitterness, so often seen in spirited women who know the importance of continuing attractive under the cruellest of circumstances. To her credit be it admitted that she possessed the shrewd qualities necessary for victory in her particular struggle. She dressed simply, but well. She maintained her home in simple, but attractive good taste. Unable to afford servants she managed capably by herself, and yet her hands remained the envy of her friends. There was not a wrinkle upon her face, for she had commanded that aristocratic staidness of expression that obscures age in those who possess it.

She had, to be sure, much to be thankful for. Her husband was a special comfort. George MacDowell was, in her opinion, an example of a type of man that God no longer saw fit to make. Tall and strong, and as youthful in spirit as the day she had met him, he had never entertained an ambitious thought. He was still the hypnotically attractive chap he had always been, with his black eyes that could freeze or kindle with pleasure at his will. He had swung through life indifferent to everything but Gloria Smith, and his love for her had been just simple, absolute idolatry. He was pre-eminently clever and a born diplomat. His wife

accurately described this quality when she said, "George could tell a person to go to hell, and he would do it so smoothly that the person would feel flattered!"

If ever there was a case of a woman robbing the State of a powerful asset this home illustrated it. MacDowell could have made himself Premier of Canada. Whatever he turned his hand to succeeded. But the only thing he had ever seriously accomplished was to love his wife; and even this, to all outward seeming, had never been a very serious matter either. He was always playfully chiding and teasing her. But she was in command. He followed her wishes blindly, yet with a dignity that proclaimed his motive. It was not the thralldom of a weakling, but the conscious surrender of a giant. This clever and able and imposing man could have been anything he chose, but he chose to be only a lover.

CHAPTER III.

FREDA COMES HOME.

"Tea, thou soft, thou sober, sage and venerable liquid!"—Colley Cibber's, "The Ladies' Last Stake."

FREDA, as may be surmised, had no sympathy with her mother's frantic social struggle. Her father, who until five years ago, had been one of Lockwood's chief business men, was now idle, and, although he managed his idleness with remarkable grace, his wealth was meagre and insufficient to justify his wife's social ambitions.

He had been general manager of the Lockwood Carpet Corporation until a disastrous fire not only robbed him of the position, but robbed the town of its cardinal industry as well. That big winter fire had blazed so furiously that it melted the icicles on houses for blocks around. It seemed, indeed, to have been the very work of Lockwood's pursuing Nemesis. MacDowell had stood gaping from a water-drenched alley near by. Not until the large buildings had tottered and collapsed into hopeless ruin did he return to his home. His wife had made him a tasty cup of coffee.

"Lockwood is ruined," he prophesied, and then added with a sparkling smile, "but this is good coffee."

His prophesy was true. Hundreds of families left town as soon as it was learned that the Carpet Works

would not be rebuilt. The weaving looms had been operated by steam and now the directors planned to rebuild in a place where electrical power was cheap. They offered him his position again, but he refused to leave Lockwood. They could not understand his stubbornness, nor the loyalty that made him "stay with the old town." He at once blossomed out into the most ardent of local "boosters." He assured Lockwood of a speedy return of local prosperity. "Gentlemen," he had said to the Board of Trade, "I could not leave the old town which has had so pleasant a past, and which will have, I am confident, so brilliant a future." To the undiscerning eye he gained, in his rôle of perpetual belief in Lockwood, a heroic character. Each New Year's Day he published in the paper a long letter of cheer, courage and optimism, begging the citizens to be hopeful. It would not be long until some big industry would see the advantages of locating in Lockwood. "We have experienced the mercurial fluctuations of fortune, but the dead past must bury its dead. Here beside us is the great St. Lawrence with its unharnessed energy and its facilities for transportation. Some big industry is going to see the advantages. Here in our midst we have the best schools that money can operate, the finest churches that religion can claim, the highest degree of municipal efficiency in the country, and, as for beauty, have we not been called 'The Garden of Upper Canada?' Let us patiently wait, for prosperity will return. It must return."

Little wonder that George MacDowell was acclaimed the first citizen. He was made mayor the very year of the fire and had remained in that office ever since by repeated acclamations. His tall, serious, reposeful

figure struck confidence into the public activities. Such a strong, capable man would never have remained so long in Lockwood unless he believed in Lockwood's future.

And yet the fact was that George MacDowell was posing all the time. His bluff was such a complete triumph that even Freda failed to see through it. It was merely his way of being graceful. Gloria insisted on remaining in the old Smith house. He would gladly remain with her and, at the same time, make the public think that he was inspired by municipal sentiment.

When Freda returned from Merlton he met her at the train. There was a time when he drove a motor-car, but of late years it was never taken out of the garage except when Freda drove it. He carried her valise across the platform, to be confronted by a mad platoon of taxi-drivers eager for patronage. They chose an old hack that had been on duty forty years. Few other towns would have tolerated the old-fashioned vehicle with its low, commodious seat, the extravagantly graceful curves of its body, its weather-beaten varnish and its quaint side-lamps of brass, designed like the wall-torches of a baronial castle. In most neighboring towns, more imbued with a spirit of progress, this picturesque conveyance would have been relegated long since to some backyard, or broken up for fuel. But Lockwood possessed a conservative cult who admired the symbols of leisure. This antiquated hack frequently moved down Station Street filled with the town's elite, making no attempt to keep pace with the motors that rushed madly ahead, angry at having to return empty.

"I don't see a single vacant house, Dad," remarked Freda, as they started along Station Street.

"Nor do I by gad," replied her father. "Lockwood is filling up, but with a rummy bunch of people. These houses should be tenanted by industrious workmen. Instead they are occupied by retired shopkeepers, farmers and clergymen from the country districts."

"Why do you call 'em rummy?" Freda inquired.

"Cause they *are* rummy, Freda. They're no good to the town. They retired before the war on enough to keep 'em at six per cent. To-day, even at seven and a half, they're swamped by increasing taxation and the H.C.L. They're the growlers. Did you hear about the school fracas?"

"Oh, dear; no!"

"Interested?"

"Terribly."

"Good! The school was overcrowded; they were holding classes in the basement. Henry Dover came to me and asked if I thought the collegiate could be enlarged. Said he had eleven teachers now and needed room. Did I think it could be done? I said it was as plain as the nose on his face. It *had* to be done or we'd lose the pupils. But when the Board of Education put it to a vote—wow! What a wail from the retired element! Motion defeated, of course!"

"But you can't blame them, Dad."

"No. Admitted! I don't blame them."

Presently, as they turned upon Queen Street, MacDowell made a gesture toward the spectacle of broad, tarvia pavement, bulwarked on both sides with cluster lamps and high brick shops.

"Where will you find a better looking main street?"

he asked, almost automatically. "And, do you know, our population, by the latest census, shows an increase of three?"

"Oh, surely, not just three!" exclaimed Freda.

"Why, that's good," said MacDowell, with a lurking smile of cynicism that his daughter did not notice. "We're not growing very rapidly. *But just you wait.* One of these days some big concern is going to see the advantages of locating in Lockwood. As electric power is developed we're going to get the advantage. Think of that river! Some day we'll be a city. *Just you wait!*"

Lockwood had already been waiting for half a century. Freda had heard her father's words so often that she knew them by heart: "One of these days some big concern—" And her heart that knew the words so well caught her with needless pity for the man she considered so incurably optimistic.

When the hack arrived at their home, Freda was not in the least surprised to discover an afternoon tea in full progress on the rear verandah. She knew just how essential afternoon teas were in Queen Street East, but she could not suppress a certain impatience.

"Heavens, mother is right at the post of duty!" she exclaimed as they drove up near the verandah. "Apparently the home-coming of the prodigal daughter has caused a feast to be set!"

"Never mind," chuckled MacDowell, good-naturedly. "Your mother never liked your staying at that place on Franklin Street and probably will never forgive you. But she's glad to see you just the same."

"Mother is a woman of one idea," sighed Freda.

"Course she is," he laughed. "She had planned this tea before she knew when you were coming."

Mrs. MacDowell gracefully left the verandah to greet Freda with a kiss, and then led her straight back to her guests. Most of them had a word of welcome, with the exception of Mrs. Courtney, who contributed merely a stiff, little nod of her silver-grey head. It was just like Freda to accept this as a challenge. She paused and directed her most obsequious attentions upon the wealthy widow who had long been a thorn in her flesh.

"Oh, Mrs. Courtney," she said, extending her hand with feigned good-will and adopting at once a Lockwood type of afternoon-tea formality, "How awfully well you look! Are you playing much golf this summer?"

"Child, you *know* I never play golf," responded Mrs. Courtney, with evident ill-relish.

"Oh, of course, not. How stupid of me! You must forgive me! I was thinking of Mrs. Beecher."

Mrs. Courtney flushed and glanced sharply at Freda who, wreathed in smiles, bowed to the others and went into the house. The arrow had found its mark. In the first place, the huge figure of Mrs. Courtney playing golf would have made a screamingly funny and grotesque cartoon. But to be confused in any way whatsoever with her social enemy, Mrs. Beecher, was an unforgivable mistake.

"I do wish," remarked Mrs. MacDowell, caustically, while she and Freda were later engaged with washing the dinner dishes, "that you would try to use a slight degree of sense. Your *faux pas* this afternoon offended Mrs. Courtney, visibly."

"Dear heavens," laughed Freda, so heartily that she had to drop into a chair; "I'm glad if it did, Mother. She's one of the most exalted persons I ever heard of."

"And you, my girl, are one of the most reckless," quickly rejoined her mother.

"Do you remember," asked Freda, "how miserable she made things for me about six years ago when she was afraid that I was going to get her darling young Teddie?"

"I do, indeed, Freda."

"How she cut me, more than once?"

"I remember it, quite," nodded Mrs. MacDowell. "But such revenge as yours is merely senseless."

"You think I ought to be more thorough-going, do you?" asked Freda. "Perhaps you think a better revenge would be to marry Ted Courtney, even yet—"

Mrs. MacDowell cast a long, steady look at Freda, a look full of her grey-eyed criticism, full of her tranquil-faced reserve, full of her Family-Compact self-sufficiency; but she said not a word more.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OPTIMIST.

"He is a father to the town."—Latin Proverb.

AFTER dinner, Freda was left suddenly alone. Her mother was up the river at a bridge party on Courtney's elegant yacht, the *Cinderella*. Her father was at home, but she felt that after her year's absence it would be necessary to become acquainted with him again. When he finished his paper, he strolled with her about the wide lawn, asking many questions about her work in Merlton. He was very impersonal and almost polite and, although Freda was sure he was not much interested in her work, she admired his consummate smoothness. During all the years of her grown-up life he had been just as impervious and just as winningly polished as to-night. She felt the same attraction as if she were talking with any cultivated and gentlemanly stranger.

"It must be nice, Dad, to be the whole cheese in this town," she said, teasingly.

"If you're referring to me," he replied, "I'll enquire—before thanking you for the compliment—whether or not you're seeking municipal favor?"

"Not for myself, but for somebody else," she answered quickly.

"Who on earth?"

"Will you promise to do something for me?" she asked, taking his arm prettily.

"Yes, I guess so," he smiled.

"No matter what I ask?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Listen, Dad, to me," she said, stopping and looking up into his big, curious, black eyes. "If a young gentleman named Mauney Bard tries to get on the collegiate staff will you tell Henry Dover that he's one of the brightest boys in Canada, and will you put in a good word with the Board of Education?"

"What's his name?"

"Mauney Bard."

"All right. I'll do it," agreed MacDowell. "Hum! Brightest boy in Canada, is he? That's going some. Who is this Mauney Bard?"

"Oh, just a nice chap who boarded at Franklin Street with me."

"You're always given to exaggeration, if I may so express myself," he smiled. "I suppose when you get it all boiled down, Mauney Bard is just a man after a job."

"No, no, you're all wrong, Dad. He's more than that—I'm in love with him."

"Who? Mauney Bard?"

"Yes."

"All right," said MacDowell, complacently. "You've been in love before now."

"You're wrong again, Dad," she replied. She wanted to tell her father—or somebody—how she felt about Mauney, but her father's interest seemed only casual. Freda consequently remained silent and became very unhappy. That silence and unhappiness of Lockwood would always arrive sooner or later. To-night was typical of her home—her mother off to a game of cards

and her father chatting just as any interesting, but total, stranger might do.

Lockwood always caused a little flutter in her heart and then a depression. Her mother's social ambition had constituted a problem which she had solved only by leaving home. Fawning upon the plutocracy was, without exception, the most disgusting practice of which Freda could conceive.

"Are we always going to go on living in this hide-bound community, Dad?" she asked, as they strolled together. "I hate it just like snakes. I could murder that Mrs. Courtney and the whole raft of them."

"Oh, they're all right as far as they go," he replied lightly. "The Courtneys, Turnbulls, Beechers, Squires and that ilk don't help Lockwood much. They don't spend their money here. This is only a pivot for them. They're off to California, Honolulu or Europe half the time. And they don't want industries here—they're afraid of the coal smoke. But, never mind! They won't always run the town. Some day some big concern is going to see the—"

"Some day," Freda said, seriously, "you and I, Dad, are both going to be dead. Why can't we leave Lockwood and live in Merlton?"

"Simply because," he replied firmly, "we're not going to forsake the old town. That would be unfaithful." His black eyes flashed with concealed amusement. "Lockwood will be a city some day. It's bound to be. Just you wait!"

Freda was deliciously impatient and vexed and sad when she retired that night. From her bed, she gazed at the grey St. Lawrence out under the cliff, and realized at length that she was already lonesome for Mauney.

CHAPTER V.

MAUNEY MEETS MRS. MACDOWELL.

WHEN Mauney arrived in Lockwood, on his way home, he completed certain reflections which had occupied him most of the day by deciding not to call upon Freda. But he found that his brother William, who had driven in for him from Lantern Marsh, had still some shopping to do before returning, and he made up his mind to stroll down Queen Street East, past her home. This little walk had the effect of making him quite unhappy. First of all he passed the Armouries, which recalled his unsuccessful attempt to enlist, eight years ago. In the associations of that memory there was bitterness which still troubled him. In the second place, although he had Freda's street number, he could not find her house until he made the enquiry of an officious nurse-maid who pushed her baby-carriage no less haughtily than she pointed out the MacDowell residence. He stood still and gazed confusedly at the high stone wall and the forbidding gateway. Was there not some mistake? He had not thought of Freda as belonging to so grand a home. His perplexity, combined with a self-conscious sense of his own ill-groomed appearance after the train journey, strengthened his determination not to call.

It was hard to forego seeing her. Her house and

his clothes, however, had little to do with it. The real obstacle was Lee. Why must he consider his old friend so much? Why should Lee's attachment to Freda, unreciprocated and hopeless, have any influence? Mauney had labored these questions all day, and he had discovered the only possible answer. It was because he himself was constituted as he was.

On his way back to meet his brother in the centre of the town, he kept rehearsing his argument. He wished that he possessed enough indifference to Lee to disregard him. The present situation was characteristic of life as he had learned to know it. Never yet had he longed greatly for anything, but he must face obstacles apparently insuperable. Just now it was his respect for Maxwell Lee that held him back. Lee had not mentioned Freda during the trip to Rockland, but then, Max never mentioned anything that he felt keenly. He even omitted to thank Mauney for his kindness in providing help at a crucial moment.

The only course that Mauney could consider was to wait for events. If Lee recovered, there would no longer be any obstacle in the path that led him to Freda. If he died, the way was even clearer. But it might be months before either fate, and, in the meantime, Mauney determined to be towards Freda friendly at most.

He had not been home many days when a letter of acceptance came from the Lockwood Board of Education, and another letter from the collegiate principal, Henry Dover, requesting an early interview. He drove to town in William's motor-car and spent an hour with Dover at the school, gaining some idea of his work, which was to begin in September.

Then he paid a call at MacDowell's, which he was not soon to forget. Freda's mother answered the door and, as she heard his name, favored him with a long, rude, critical stare that gradually shaded into a supercilious smile as she turned away without a word, leaving him standing in the doorway. Freda chanced to be in the library, close enough apparently to grasp the situation, for she came out at once, speaking calmly, to be sure, but with cheeks a flaming crimson. Mauney, to whom such an encounter was a new experience, was, for a time, too stunned to talk much.

"I've been expecting you for days," Freda said, leading him to the farther verandah and arranging chairs. "Sit down and rest your weary bones, won't you? Tell me all about what you've been doing. Aren't you going to talk?"

"Yes," he replied slowly, "I expect to say a few words; but may I enquire if it was your mother who came to the door?"

"Oh, please don't mind her, Mauney," said Freda, awkwardly. "You see, mother is quite unreasonable about some things. I'll explain that all, some day. Tell me—any word about the school?"

While he was talking she sat wondering what difference she noticed in him. He had altered somehow. The smile of his eyes was gone. There was something stubbornly immovable about his big body as he sat with legs crossed and arms folded on his chest, and his eyes only glanced at her before they turned away sadly, as she thought.

"Freda," he said after a pause. "I can't place you in this house. There's some mistake."

"How do you mean?" she asked with an expression of great interest.

"You won't mind me being frank?"

"Not one particle, Mauney."

He unfolded his arms and leaned slowly forward, rubbing his cheek with his hand.

"I never knew I could get so darned worked up over a little thing," he said, testily. "Your mother froze me in there. I'm beginning to think, Freda, that I can feel just about as snobbish as she does."

"You said it, Mauney," she whispered. "I've no sympathy at all for her. Please try to grasp that point right now. I told her about you, and she's just been waiting to make you feel unwelcome."

"She's succeeded, too."

"She succeeds in everything, but managing me," Freda went on warmly. "Oh, I can't, simply can't tell you what I've had to put up with, Mauney. I don't feel one-half as much at home here as I did at Gertrude's. Listen. My mother—and I'm sorry I have to say it—is an inexcusable snob from the word go. Her ideas aren't any more like mine than day is like night. So you can understand why I don't spend much time in Lockwood."

"Are you going back to Merlton this fall?"

"I don't know."

Mauney regarded her in silence for a moment, as their eyes met and did not waver.

"My God, Freda, you're a comfort," he said suddenly. With a little laugh he rose and picked up his hat from the table. "I've got to be going."

"And don't forget," she said, as she walked beside

him to the car, "that there will be somebody here waiting to see you again, soon."

"I'm not likely to forget it," he said, giving her arm a gentle pinch. "The fact is, nothing else much suits me, but being around where you are."

That evening, after Freda had washed the dinner dishes, she remained thoughtfully busy in the kitchen. Presently her mother, as she had been expecting, came out to prepare some grape-fruit for the breakfast, and incidentally, to pass a few remarks about Mauney. She had sunk the blade of her knife into the green fruit before she glanced up to behold Freda, who, in accordance with old custom, was sitting perched on the back of a kitchen chair with her feet resting on its seat. With a thin sigh that expressed her disapproval of the posture, Mrs. MacDowell took up a pair of scissors and proceeded with her work.

"Has it ever occurred to you," she commenced, in a delicately scornful tone, "that this Bard person is a rather stiffish youth?"

"He's stiffish all right enough, Mother," said Freda with an amused chuckle. "I used to always fall for the foppish variety, didn't I? But I'm getting old, and my taste in men is changing."

"I'm not so sure, but that he's related to the Bards of Beulah, who bring turnips to the market," submitted her mother, calmly, as she snipped away with her scissors.

"I imagine you're quite right," Freda said. "Mauney has hoed 'em himself lots of times, and is proud of it."

"He seems to have practically no social address, no ease of manner."

"I fancy he'll carry away an equal contempt for

yours. Was that your highest code of manners you were practising on him? As for social address—you're right. He wasn't around when they were handing that stuff out. He has never had his spine manicured!"

"Spine!" Mrs. MacDowell scoffed very gently. "What a delightful Franklin Street vocabulary you have acquired! As long as I care to remember, you have never been willing to listen to a word from me."

"Well, Mother, you never said a word that appealed to me. That's why."

Freda rapped with her toes in an aggravating tattoo on the chair seat, and then began teetering back and forth in such a way that the front legs kept dropping noisily against the floor. Mrs. MacDowell worked on quietly for a few moments.

"Freda," she said at length, without looking up, "I sincerely wish that you, some time or other, will gratify a long-cherished desire of mine by falling flat off that confounded chair."

"And cracking my skull, I suppose," added Freda, the meanwhile balancing skilfully on the two back legs. "Well, this is my favorite sport, and it's worth a skull any time. Do you know, Mother, I've a good notion not to go back to Merlton this fall."

Mrs. MacDowell did not at once reply.

"That is almost the brightest idea that has emerged from your skull since you came home," she said presently, in a tone of sarcasm. "How would you propose to amuse yourself in Lockwood?"

"I could get a job as private secretary to Ted Courtney. Ted needs somebody to help him look after his money. I was talking to him on the street last night, and asked him if he could give me a job. He jumped

right at the idea like a bulldog. Says he's needed some one for a long time, and, I may say, he offers me a splendid proposition. I said I'd have to take a few days to consider it."

Mrs. MacDowell gazed on Freda with the expression of one who has learned by experience to credit even the most preposterous of her daughter's statements. "I trust," she interrupted seriously, "that there is no truth in what you are saying."

"Get me a Bible, then," replied Freda. "I suppose the idea of me working for a Courtney is about the same to you, Mother, as a long drink of twenty percent. Paris Green."

"Why, it's so absurd!" mused Mrs. MacDowell, "so utterly absurd!"

"You mean humiliating, don't you?" asked Freda, tapping thoughtfully now with her toes. "There used to be a time when social position depended on brains, ability, blood, and such personal things. That's so long ago that Herodotus would have to scratch his dome to remember it. Right now, it depends on how one's daughter spends her time. If I could float around in a new Packard roadster with a Pekinese pup sitting on a blue cushion beside me, why your dear, old prestige would be as safe as the Bank of England. But I've got imbued, Mother, with the thoroughly low-brow idea that a woman of my age—of any age for that matter—is better when she's at work."

"And I'm quite sure," said Mrs. MacDowell, with considerable emphasis, "that your reason for wishing to stay in Lockwood is merely to be near our young turnip-digger."

Freda's face flushed, but she disregarded the refer-

ence. "I shouldn't be at all surprised, Mother," she replied with a growing warmth, "if that had something to do with it. But there is also another reason. I've just simply ached, these last six years, to enjoy a little home life, undisturbed, and you've given me no chance. I come home and all the time either you are away off somewhere, or else so surrounded by a bunch of darned fools that I never see you."

"That's *quite* enough!" commanded Mrs. MacDowell. "Surely you're growing irresponsible."

Freda's face was crimson and her eyes flashing with a dangerous light. She tried to swallow something that stuck in her throat. Her mother knew these symptoms well enough. They meant rage. They meant that Freda must be left alone for the balance of the evening.

Several minutes after Mrs. MacDowell had gone her husband sauntered into the kitchen, to find his daughter sitting in the same position, but with her face in her hands.

"You women folk astonish me," he laughed. "There's nothing in it, Freda; nothing in it. Your mother is a Smith, remember. Enough said. She's different. There's nothing in it at all, by gad!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SUMMER AT HOME.

UNTIL the present summer Mauney had never gone back to the farm at Lantern Marsh, so that now, with his new mental outlook, he was for the first time enjoying it. William was living on his father's place and renting the old McBratney property to an Englishman. Time had brought about changes. William was no longer the insupportable person he had once been. His wife Evelyn had adapted herself, cheerfully, to her circumstances. She found no time now to indulge her former love of gramophones and motoring. The two were living happily together, while the wonted sombreness of the old home was gratefully relieved by the shrill voices of two healthy children. William, once the scoffer, was now proud of his brother, while Mauney had learned a tolerance that made William's bad English even lovably picturesque.

"Well, Maun," William would say, "you've got the book learning fer the hull crowd. But while you've been a-studyin' I've been raisin' a family, an' there ain't no good o' us two tryin' to argue which is the best. But I'll take the family every time!"

Then Mauney would laugh and reply, "There's nothing like being happy, Bill, whatever you have to do to get there."

He felt that he himself was very gradually arriving. Ahead lay the treasures of history to be expounded to a new generation. With his own hands he was to lift before their eyes the ideals which he had won. It took no more than this glorious prospect to make him very content.

There was sadness, though, in every memory of Lantern Marsh. Time after time during the summer months, thoughts rushed unbidden upon him to shake his being—those family sentiments of past scenes, pathetic differences of opinion, once so important, but now so irrevocable and small. The eye of retrospect sees with a tender sight. Mauney kept fancying that his father's big form must soon appear at the lane entrance carrying a whiffletree, or his harsh voice be heard swearing at his horses. The man had lived up to his light. Experience forgave him his faults. But now Seth Bard, with all his gruffness and strength, was silent and vanished. Once he had seemed the most immovable body on earth, the one great, availing magnitude. But even the winds that blew from unseen quarters across the desolate marsh were more enduring than he.

And Mauney's sadness found a strange kind of comfort as he gazed upon that never-ending swamp. It had been there always. Since he had known anything he had known that swamp—bleak and horrid and fascinating, as changing as the phases of his own life; never the same for two days in succession, and yet always the same. On sunny afternoons, great, white clouds hung over it and the blue of the sky lay mirrored in the long, narrow strips of water far out. Then would come the disturbing breezes, growing into winds

that moved the trees and reed banks, then into the hurricane that transformed it all, till it vibrated like a living and suffering being, its green acres of sedge whipped to a surface like shot silk, its channels churned to a muddy red, the moving sky glaring with storm, and the stunted hemlocks, huddling frantically together along its edges. This old swamp, hated and loved, defeated, but eternal, was relic of all that Mauney regretted in those sad hours that came upon him during the summer months.

But these remembrances were being pushed back farther and farther out of sense, while the vital events of life occupied him more and more. Coming into the house, tired, but satisfied, after the day's work in the hayfield, he would sit quietly on the kitchen verandah, watching the sun sink beyond the corner of the big, dark barn. The sound of crickets filled the air with a metallic vibration. His contentment was as deep as the gulf of crimson sky above him, and his happiness as much a-quiver as the air. As he sat here, lulled into grateful meditation, perhaps Evelyn would interrupt him.

"I'll bet a dollar, Maun, you're in love!" she would venture.

And he would wonder if it was possible that any love was ever quite as wonderful as his for Freda. Never since human life began had any woman been as dear as she was to him. She was so real. There was not an atom of dissimulation about her. Freda—who had flashed upon him like a blinding light, who had believed in him—had become constant in his thoughts. Freda was the great reality. Nothing could daunt him,

nothing could make him one little bit unhappy, so long as he knew that ultimately he would possess her.

But he purposely refrained from seeing her much. The few calls that he made at her home were in response to her invitations, and he fancied that she understood well enough the reasons for his restraint.

The hot harvest season passed very tardily. The August sun grew more intense as the long, sultry days drew out. There was never even a cloudy day to remove the accumulating tension of the heat. The grey, baked earth cracked into deep fissures. The wells dried up, and even the waters of the marsh sank, day by day, until at the end of the month they were entirely gone. There was no greenness anywhere; the rushes and sedges were burnt into amber shades, with yellow fuzz that blended dully with the parched meadows. And the creatures of the swamp were either silent or departed. Mauney missed them.

The farmers began to talk ruin. William Henry McBratney, passing the lane on a visit from Beulah, pulled up his horse to discuss the weather with Mauney. His evil face, the more evil because of its senile wasting, was painfully worried, and his mad, dim eyes sparkled in accord with his feelings.

"Well, sir, Maun," he said, striking his knee with his sprawling, bony palm, "I've seed a good many dry spells, but nothing like this. It's nigh onto fifty years since me and my first missus settled here. But, sir, I tell you what! This here harvest has been the driest ever."

"But I think we'll get rain, don't you?" asked Mauney.

"No, sir, I don't," affirmed the old man, with an ex-

pression of settled gloom. "Every mornin' I've been a-looking for a cloud or two, but that sky, sir, I tell yuh, couldn't hold a cloud. It's too damned hot fer to hold a single cloud! An', if we don't get rain the cattle's goin' to die."

"But, my dear sir," persisted Mauney, "rain is bound to come. Did you ever see it fail?"

"All I'm sayin' is, that since I come here—me an' the missus—that there marsh hain't never onct dried up that way. Yer father, Seth, never seed it like that, I tell yuh. No, sir. An' if it's me ye'r askin' I'd deny that there'll be any rain. Leastways, I'd hev to see it to believe it!"

Such logic was more depressing than convincing.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST DAY.

ON the first of September, when Mauney came to Lockwood to find a boarding-place and to buy a few articles of clothing before the school term began, he found everybody in ill humor. Along Queen Street West, in the shop district, men were sweltering, with handkerchiefs tucked about their collars, carrying their coats and fanning themselves with their hats. In a shoe store the air was humid and suffocating, and the patience of the young clerk seemed dangerously exhausted.

"I don't know why you don't like those oxfords," he said, gruffly, as he unlaced the third shoe he had tried to sell his customer.

"And we're not going into the reasons for our dislike," Mauney replied. "I don't like them, and that's all there is to it."

"Well," sighed the clerk, "we've got better shoes in the store; but you'd have to pay twelve-fifty."

"Have you any objection to me paying twelve-fifty?" The shoes were fitted.

"You won't make any mistake if you get those, sir," affirmed the salesman, more affably. "I just sold a pair of those very shoes to Ted Courtney, not more than an hour ago."

"And who the devil is Ted Courtney?" asked Mauney.

The clerk surveyed his customer blankly for a moment. "If you don't know who the Courtneys are," he mumbled, at length, "you don't know much about Lockwood."

"I'll have to confess that I don't," admitted Mauney, with a chuckle to himself, "but these shoes suit me all right."

He next entered a haberdashery shop and asked for shirts. The clerk was a smartly-dressed man of middle age.

"You don't care for those," he commented, as Mauney finished surveying some that were on display. "Well, we haven't much choice left in the cheaper lines, but I can show you some in a very excellent material. This particular shirt," he continued, as he selected an example, "is being worn by the best dressers this season. We have had difficulty keeping stocked in it. I may say that I sold a half-dozen of this line to Mr. Ted Courtney, only yesterday."

Mauney's hand fell limply on the counter as he began to laugh for no reason apparent to the serious-faced salesman.

"I wish you'd tell me who Ted Courtney is. I haven't been able to decide as yet whether he is the Beau Nash of Lockwood or a cousin of the Prince of Wales."

"You're a stranger in town? Indeed. The Courtneys, of course, are among our wealthiest residents—awfully nice people, with whom it is always a pleasure to deal."

"In that case," said Mauney, with an amused expression, "I suppose I had better fall in line."

Next he proceeded to a tobacconist's to buy a news-

paper and cigarettes. While he was talking to the clerk he realized that he was being gently, but effectively, elbowed sidewise by a stranger, who, in his impatience to capture a newspaper from a pile nearby, reached directly in front of Mauney's face. In drawing out his copy of the journal he not only upset the pile, but knocked the silver out of Mauney's hand. Turning in expectation of adjusting what was evidently an unavoidable situation, Mauney was surprised to behold the young man walking quickly away through the door and entering a sumptuous motor-car at the curb. He watched him drive away, then turned to the clerk.

"Did you notice who that fellow was?" he asked.

"You bet I did," the other snarled, as he brought order once more to the untidy counter, "and I've got his number, too. That bird is getting just a wee bit too fresh. Just because his old man happened to make a few dishonest millions out West, he's got the idea that the rest of us bums just live to wait on him. But I'll tell you one thing," he added with a curse, "the next time he tries any rough-house he's going to get a heavy lid."

"I wouldn't blame you much," said Mauney, picking up his change. "Who is he?"

"Don't you know him? Why that's Mister Edward Courtney. Lives in that house down Queen East that looks like a bloody prison. Got about twenty motor-cars, but don't know when he's well off. Just let him try that trick again and, so help me Kate, I don't care if it takes me to the police court, he's goin' to get a rocker right on that damned dimple!"

That evening, when talking to Freda, Mauney related

the incident and was surprised when she defended Courtney.

"I haven't any use for the family taken collectively," she admitted, "but you'd have to know Ted to understand that incident. He's really not such a bad lot—a most terrible enthusiast over trifles and frightfully absent-minded at times. Probably when he bunted into you he was in a hurry to get to the ball game and didn't realize what he was doing. I've known Ted just about all my life, and I'd put it down to pure thoughtlessness and animal pep. Of course, he's spoiled and needs a lesson, I know that!"

"You'll get accustomed to Lockwood ways, perhaps," she said a little later, as she took Mauney for a spin up the river road, out of town. "And perhaps you won't. I hate to discourage you, but I'm a little afraid you never will tune up to Lockwood. I never have, and we're something alike, are we not?"

As they sped along the winding tarvia road, under arching elms, past clusters of willows in the hollows, and groves of pine, with numerous summer residences facing the river, Freda kept nodding to acquaintances in other cars.

"Isn't that Courtney's roadster?" asked Mauney, turning to see it disappear behind them.

"Yes, and Ted saw me," laughed Freda, "and, what's more exciting, he saw you. I'll bet anything he'll turn around and overtake us before we've gone much farther. I'll tell you what, Mauney! We'll stop at the Country Club. I'm not a member any more, but a lot of the real Lockwood swells hang out there. Of course, I just want to show you off. Mrs. Beecher will see you and then to-morrow at some tea or other she'll

let out the big item of the season. I can just hear her as she makes her announcement: "What do you suppose! Freda MacDowell breezed into the club last night with a Mr. Bard, who, I understand, is the new member of the collegiate staff. Hum, hum, now what do you think of that?"

"And what will they think of it, Freda?" asked Mauney seriously.

"They can't think. They haven't got the equipment. It's just the news they're after, nothing more. They can't think anything, anyway. But I want them to know that you were riding in my car. Of course," chuckled Freda, "if you were a married man, then they'd be happier. They'd have a scandal, then."

"Is there much scandal in Lockwood?" Mauney asked, carelessly.

"Scandal!" she exclaimed. "Why, these people live on it. I just wish I could smuggle you into a real *bona fide* afternoon tea. It's a very tame tea that doesn't succeed in executing at least one hitherto unblemished reputation. It's love affairs they prefer, of course. But—am I boring you?"

"On the contrary I'm quite interested, Freda. Most towns are the same."

"But Lockwood has developed it to something like a fine art," she replied, with the certainty of tone of an expert who has studied the matter in hand. Then she proceeded to give a characteristically accurate summary of the entire subject.

"There were afternoon teas in Lockwood before there were churches, and even to-day they are better attended. Church, with these people, is an occasional business, but teas are a constant necessity. Some of these fat

society dames have reached the sublime stage of existence where their enfeebled brains can deal with only the simplest data. They can't read books that require any thought. They don't have to read, so for that very reason they don't read. But they do have to go to afternoon teas, because it's there they find the exact food they're in need of. I don't mean cookies and cakes, either, because most of them have been requested by their M.D.'s to cut down on carbo-hydrates. What they need, Mauney, is scandal. If the scandal deals with a love affair, why then it's an AI scandal. Anything racy and illicit holds them like nothing else. Now, just why these bloated excuses for womanhood—and many of them have had turbulent enough youths themselves—should get to the stage where only vicarious experiences can stir their vanishing passions, is a question that revolts me. I leave that for the morbid psychologists to settle."

"I'll tell you something, Mauney," she went on, as she looked before her along the road. "These afternoon teas are no joke with me. I hate them as I hate anything that's noisy and empty. They had a lot to do with my leaving home."

"But did you ever think, Freda," asked Mauney, "that gossip unconsciously cleanses society? People, fearing scandal, are more likely to be careful how they act."

"Ah, yes," she replied. "There's something in that argument, too. If these old gossipers in Lockwood were conscientiously trying to reform society by means of publicity campaigns I'd give them credit. In the first place, however, they don't give a continental about

morals, public or private, and in the second place, they're very corruptible."

"Corruptible?"

"Yes; they grant exemptions. There are people in Lockwood who can get away with murder just because they've got money. There are people who are never discussed because the scandal-mongers fear to lose their favor. No; I put no stock in that cleansing business at all. I've told you exactly what I think of the whole bunch."

"But why take them so seriously, Freda?" asked Mauney. "It's almost an adage that women will gossip just as men will smoke."

"I suppose it's because of the way I'm constituted," she replied. "We had a wash-woman who used to say to me, 'Freda, everything all depends on just how it is with you.' And I'll tell you just how it is with me, Mauney. I've got a serious streak somewhere in my system."

"I think you're the most serious girl I know," interrupted Mauney.

"Thanks. I admire your insight, young man. I really do want to thank you for just that, Mauney. But I was going to tell you that I went through hell, almost literally, six years ago, just before I went to college. The real hard-boiled fact of the case was that I lost my respect for my own mother, and the main reason I lost it was because, apparently, she could live and thrive and be entirely satisfied on the mental diet of afternoon-tea scandals. So, although, as you say, gossiping may be considered as part of the day's work, it sometimes has unforeseen results. And once or twice I've seen

people rendered extremely unhappy, by scandals they didn't deserve. The ladies aren't a bit accurate."

"I think," said Mauney, "you ought to write a book on scandal-mongery as well as one on a university."

"Oh, but I was going to tell you the hidden irony of this scandal-mongery in Lockwood. It will show you just how insincere they are. The persons scandalized become popular, provided their misdeeds are not merely stupid. They become actually heroes. They are admired secretly all the time. They gain an importance never before enjoyed. But they don't know this, and they suffer needlessly under the lash of women's tongues. I tell you, Mauney, these women will excuse a person for anything. All they ask is the vicarious fun of it for themselves. I knew a merchant in town who never had much of a business until after it was reported that he had for years been running another home up in Merlton. Apparently they admired, not only his personal cleverness, but his business ability to be able to afford it. He became popular at once and has had a good trade ever since."

Freda was now turning down a side road to the river, where on the level bank stood the Country Club House, a long, low bungalow finished in shingles of British Columbia cedar. On the wide verandahs which surrounded it many young and middle-aged people were sitting at tables, drinking or standing in groups engaged in conversation.

They left the car at the end of a long line on the side of the road and walked towards the verandah. They could hear the tones of the piano within the pavilion, and as they came nearer could see the moving figures of people dancing. As Freda guided Mauney about

the verandah, nodding to several of the guests, he noticed that the constant buzz of conversation was concerned chiefly with golf. Mauney was introduced to some of the members, and as he talked with them found himself slightly ill at ease, because he had never learned to play golf. After a few minutes he began to be conscious of many curious eyes turned in his direction, some of them friendly enough, others merely curious, and a few intensely critical. The conversation was growing less. He felt awkward until he suddenly realized that all these people had been waiting for something, when at last a roadster, which had now become familiar to Mauney, glided quickly up to the verandah, uncomfortably filled with men. As they alighted, carrying musical instruments, it became clear that Courtney had motored to town after an orchestra. An impromptu dance immediately followed.

It had no sooner begun than Courtney, finding Freda at a table with Mauney, came up to speak to her. Gracefully tall, wearing flannels, bare-headed and completely at ease, he appeared to be not older than twenty-five. His black hair was scrupulously barbered and glossy. His flashing, black eyes seemed to know the world, and there was an air of mild superiority, not only in his confident carriage, but in the exclusive smile of black moustachios, red lips, and very white, perfect teeth, with which he greeted Freda.

"Hello, Fly-away," he said in a deep, musical voice. "I swear you were doing fifty when I passed you."

"Mr. Courtney," said Freda, turning towards Mauney, who had risen, "meet Mr. Bard, my friend."

"How do you do?" said Courtney, with a stiff nod; then devoted himself quickly to Freda once more.

"Awful night for a dance," he admitted. "But everybody wanted it, so I blew down for Pinkerton's Harmony Hounds. Lockwood must be agreeing with you, Freda. I never saw you look more captivating."

"Thanks for those few kind words, Ted," she replied dryly, although she blushed and wished in a queer flash that Mauney could occasionally say such flattering things.

"Are you dancing?" Courtney inquired.

"Really, Ted, it's too warm, thank you; and Mr. Bard and I will be leaving soon, anyhow."

"Indeed!" he said, with a quick side-glance in Mauney's direction. Then he turned towards him. "Staying in town long, Mr. Bard, may I ask?"

"Quite a little while," said Mauney. "I'm billed to appear every morning at nine—at the collegiate, in the role of plain teacher."

"Oh!" exclaimed Courtney with evident surprise. "Teacher! Oh, indeed! I don't envy you the job of trying to pound knowledge into some of the local skulls, but I hope you like the town."

"So far I've found it unusually interesting," replied Mauney, with a twinkle of mischievous light in his eyes. "I think the word 'variegated' would describe my first impressions—some skulls much thicker than others, as you can readily imagine."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course," said Courtney, a trifle puzzled at Mauney's apparent innuendo. "I'm damned if I quite grasp what you mean, though."

"Well, you see, it's like this," smiled Mauney, with sudden decision to soften his own manner to the meaningless vapidness of Courtney's, "I've really been here only one day as yet and, no matter how shrewd an ob-

server I was, one could hardly expect me to know the place, could one?"

"Of course not," readily admitted Courtney, with a glance toward Freda, who was quite preoccupied. "Well, Freda," he said, turning to leave, "I trust you will be more careful about speeding in future. I hear Pinkerton's outfit getting into their stride; so, cheerio!" With a little wave of his hand he left, without again looking at Mauney.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

MAUNEY found a boarding-house on Church Street, directly opposite the collegiate institute, a plain unit, in a plain brick terrace set close to the sidewalk. He engaged the down-stairs front room, which looked directly upon the thoroughfare by a wide window. He liked the room chiefly because of this window, for it afforded a generous view of the street and promised an excellent point of vantage. The landlady was a gigantic Irish woman whose husband worked in a foundry. It seemed to Mauney that their occupations ought to have been interchanged, for the husband was a puny, sickly fellow, thoroughly subdued by his wife's temper. He had a way of moving quietly and guiltily through the house, as if expecting her to pounce on his back at any moment.

The first morning of Mauney's occupancy, Mrs. Hudson came into his room, gowned in her collarless, blue, print dress, broom in hand. As school would not open for a day or two, Mauney was engaged in arranging his books.

"Oh! and it's a scholar ye are, is it?" she asked.

"Teacher, Mrs. Hudson," he explained.

"Indade, an' sure I t'ought, all the time, ye were a commarcial trovler," she said, surveying the volumes

he was taking from his trunk. "I knew ye were a sangle mon. But I t'ought ye were a commarcial trovler. An' which schule, might I be asking, are ye goin' to be teaching at?"

"That one," he said, pointing through the window at the grey stone mass across the street.

"Poor mon," she sighed, as books still continued to come forth from the trunk. "It must keep ye busy. I'm glad ye're a quiet mon."

"Do I look quiet?" laughed Mauney.

"Ay, ye do thot, an' imogine me thinkin' ye were a commarcial trovler, now. Well, the saints rest ye, when are ye ging to rade all thim books?"

"In the evenings, I suppose."

"Imogine, now. Poor mon! Have ye no friends in town?"

"Oh, yes, a few."

"That's a good thing," she said, starting towards the hall, "and ye'll not be throubled with noise, onyway. 'Tis a very, very quiet house. An' I'm afther thinking ye'll need plenty o' quietness for to read so many books. Poor mon, an' me thinkin' ye were a commarcial trovler. Imagine, now!"

After she had gone, Mauney stood, idly watching an old man in a faded navy-blue suit, as he made his way slowly up the street. The senile curve of his figure was accentuated by a long, white beard, that flopped in front of his body as he jogged along. With each determined, but feeble, step he struck the pavement a sharp rap with his thick, metal-tipped cane. At regular intervals of about ten paces he invariably paused and turned slowly about to gaze backward, as though he were proudly calculating the extent of his efforts.

Mauney hardly saw the old fellow. His thoughts were running busily along with plans for his work soon to begin. Then he suddenly thought of Freda and his bosom burned, while the day seemed to expand and brighten. He had dreamed of her in the night, and she came upon his consciousness now with that unspeakable dearness, which dreams, though half-forgotten, lend to our waking thoughts. Her dark eyes were before him like infinite comfort; the sound of her voice formed a music in his mind. He wanted nothing more than Freda. He prayed that heaven would refuse him all other gifts, but her. When he opened his eyes slowly, there was the old man just in the act of turning to gaze back along the sultry street.

From the other edge of the window he espied the quicker figure of Henry Dover, the collegiate principal, on his way to his office. Although dressed in a grey, flannel suit, and a straw hat, his appearance was not lightsome. Of medium height, he walked with a pensive inclination of his head, but with an energetic and measured stride, while his arms, curved at the elbows, swung rhythmically beside him. Here was a careful, strong, man, thoroughly accustomed to the harness of office. Henry Dover, dressed in a Prussian general's uniform, and following in the cortege of a field-marshal's funeral, would perform the part with great credit.

Later in the morning, as Mauney sat idly by the window, he was conscious that the room was all at once illuminated by reflected sunlight. He looked up quickly at the figure who was passing and saw, under the shadow of her hat, and at a very near view, the face

of Jean Byrne. With an instinctive turn of her head she at once recognized him, hesitated and then stopped.

"Mauney Bard! Where did you come from?"

"Wait till I get my hat," replied Mauney.

"Well, Mrs. Poynton," he said as he joined her on the street and shook hands with her. "It's a great pleasure to see such an old friend, again."

"The same to you," she said, as they walked along, and favored him with the close scrutiny permitted to old friends on meeting. "You've changed some way or other, Mauney, but I'd know you anywhere. Your hair has lost its brilliance, and you look like a man of affairs. After reading your book I didn't know what you'd be like. I heard a few days ago that you were going to teach here; so you see you've taken my advice after all."

Her voice and manner were the same, although Mauney fancied she was more animated, an impression possibly due to her extravagant, but tasteful, costume.

"I've nearly lost track of you," he admitted. "I'd like to talk over old times. Are you on your way down town?"

"Just to the post office. Will you come along?"

"Thank you," he nodded. "Where do you live, may I ask?"

"Just a little way up Church Street, the second house past the Baptist Church. We used to live on Queen Street East, but when Charles went out West this spring—by the way, did you know that the doctor had left Lockwood?"

"No, I hadn't heard that."

"He found the town so conservative and stodgy that he thought he'd prefer things out there, and I felt that

until he got settled I'd better stay here with mother. She's getting old, you know, and is practically an invalid with rheumatism."

As they were coming out of the post office, Mauney noticed one of the middle-aged women whom he had met the previous evening at the club, sitting in a motor car at the curb. She bowed affably, then glanced quickly at Mrs. Poynton.

"Do you know Mrs. Squires?" Jean asked as they walked along.

"Yes, met her only last night."

Before leaving Jean at her home he accepted her invitation to come up for dinner that evening. Her mother was then discovered to be a woman prematurely aged by a morose and taciturn disposition, which seemed to account for her daughter's surprising animation. Jean made good to Mauney what her mother's manner lacked in friendliness. And, indeed, the home was all in distinct contrast with the impression of affluence which Jean's street appearance had so unquestionably made.

Dinner finished, Mrs. Byrne at once settled herself in a chair by a western window, and, adjusting a second pair of glasses, reached a Bible from the window-sill. Mauney thought this might herald a session of family worship, and was relieved when his hostess led him to the parlor. With a Bohemian grace that was foreign to his conception of his former country-school teacher, Jean opened for him a silver box of cigarettes, and selecting one for herself pressed it neatly into a pearl holder.

"Times have changed, since Lantern Marsh days,"

she said, smiling gently, "and I hope you have learned by this time to excuse women for their little follies."

"I am free and easy," laughed Mauney. "I've been living for the last few years in a house where cigarette-smoke was the prevailing perfume."

"And about five years on Queen Street East," Jean said, "have made these things almost essential to me. I started smoking at bridges in self-defence, and now my meals don't digest without them. Charles always hated me to smoke. But I presume he realized the environment was to blame."

For perhaps an hour they talked of Beulah and its inhabitants, of deaths and marriages, of careers which had justified their early promise, and of others which had not. Mauney briefly outlined his college experiences, but noticed that she said almost nothing about her own married life. All girlishness had departed from her face, and gone, too, was a certain carelessness of appearance which had formerly been quite refreshing. She was now, as nearly as he could judge, possessed of a dormant bitterness, never expressed, but as ugly as she was attractive. He found himself not a little curious to learn her philosophy, but even now he felt the same unexplainable distaste in her presence as he had felt during a certain evening drive, seven years ago. To be sure Jean had lost the directness which had then displeased him. She had become more subtle, more complex. But in this quiet parlor a mental hand was reaching towards him with the same emotional intent.

"Well," she said at length, "you're a sly fox. You've told me all about your life just as if there hadn't been

a single woman in it. Now, please confess, as I am desperately curious."

For some reason Mauney preserved a guarded attitude. The last thing he could have discussed, or even mentioned, was his love for Freda MacDowell.

"I am not much of a ladies' man," he smiled. "I've been told that I was a woman-hater. I guess my early upbringing was against me that way."

He soon left the house, feeling that old friendships did not necessarily improve with years, and that he himself, free and easy as he might be, was not attracted by a home where Bible-reading and cigarette-smoking were indulged by different members at the same time. It was not artistic. As for Jean, she was not an admirable person, nor even winning. He felt that he did not care if they should never meet again.

CHAPTER IX.

SEEN AT THE MARKET.

DURING the first week of September Freda saw nothing of Mauney. Each day she kept expecting that he would either call or telephone. She tried to explain his delinquency by the excuse of work; but no excuse could justify it, especially when she might be returning to Merlton at the end of the month. Her impatience increased daily. She was remaining quietly at home, assisting in the house work, and systematically declining invitations. She was prompted on Saturday morning to telephone him and find out what was the matter. On second thought she decided not to make any overtures whatever. She had planned going to the market.

That was one thing about Lockwood that Freda loved. Saturday morning, she insisted on going to market for her mother. Long before sunrise the quietness of Queen Street was disturbed by the creaking wheels of farmers' wagons coming into town, and by eight o'clock River Street Square presented a varied assembly of picturesque conveyances, each backed accurately to the cement walk that surrounded the enclosure. In the centre of the square stood a fountain, well covered by a generous canopy of faded maroon canvas, under which the farmers' horses were allowed

to stand while their owners presided, for three busy hours, beside their wagon-loads of produce.

It was a turbulent market, invaded with throngs of bargain-seeking citizens, and defended by shrewd, rustic salesmen, who withheld all bargains until the last possible moment. On certain days—no one knew why—a spirit of great conservatism reigned, when the farmers ill-temperedly refused to lower prices, and the customers, with equal stubbornness, refused to buy. At other times a happier contact prevailed, and citizens captured what seemed stupendous bargains until, on walking further along the rows of wagons, they discovered, too late, the advantages of caution.

On this Saturday, early in September, Freda set out for River Street Square to indulge her great Lockwood affection. A woman could wear any kind of clothes at market, and Freda accordingly donned a yellow silk sweater, and set forth bareheaded. Carrying a large market basket, she walked leisurely along Queen Street, enjoying the spectacle of other folk arriving, similarly equipped.

On reaching the edge of the square, she almost collided with one, Fenton Bramley, a tall, ill-groomed, but strong-featured man of possibly sixty. Although slightly stooped, his carriage suggested the British army as unerringly as his polite manner betrayed the fundamental gentleman that he was. Bramley's lines had fallen in barren places, but he was in direct descent from English nobility and could have been a knight even now, if he had possessed the necessary funds to clarify his title. Every one liked and tolerated "Fen." He was a Lockwood fixture. In conversation he maintained the off-handed ease and abruptness of introduc-

tion characteristic of his thorough self-possession. He spoke to every one and every one spoke to him.

"Freda," he commenced in a quiet, conversational tone, as if he had been talking with her continually for the past hour, "I see where that cove that murdered the bank teller's got his sentence. Did ye see that?"

"Why, no, Fen," she laughed; "I'm afraid I missed the item."

"It was an item all right," he continued. "And I had a letter yesterday from Frank Booth. He's away up in the Yukon an' says things are boomin'."

"Frank Booth," repeated Freda, trying to place the name.

"Maybe you don't remember him," admitted Bramley, scowling down attentively into her face. "You're lookin' the picture of health, Freda. And I'm not so bad myself. It's a big market to-day. Some time when you're passing the house, slip in tu see my furnitoor. Yer feyther was lookin' it over and said he liked it. Did ye see where they arrested the head of the drug ring in Merlton?"

She nodded.

"I had a letter last week from Mac Tupper," continued Bramley in his discursive way. "He's down in New York, an' says since prohibition came in they—"

"Tupper?" interrupted Freda.

"Maybe he was before your time. A great man wi' the billiard cue was Mac! How's yer feyther?"

"Oh, he's fine."

"An' yer mother?"

"She's well too."

"And yerself?"

"Dandy."

"Good-bye." Bramley plucked off his cap, bowed and walked quickly away.

"How much are your eggs?" Freda asked a farmer.

"The cheapest they'll be this here autumn, lady," he answered indifferently, with scarcely a look at his intending customer.

"But that gives me very little idea of the price," she replied.

"Strictly fresh, them eggs is, too," he said. "Picked right out o' the hay last night. It's one thing to get fresh eggs, but it's a different thing to get strictly fresh!"

He picked up one of the eggs and balanced it on the points of his fingers.

"Look at that!" he invited. "Nice, clean, white egg. D'ye notice the shape of that egg?"

"Yes."

"Then notice them in the basket," he said, pointing to the wagon. "They's all the same shape. You can depend on 'em lady."

"Suppose I put it this way," smiled Freda. "What are they worth a dozen?"

"I'm not saying what they're *worth*, lady, but—"

At this juncture the dialogue was interrupted by a short, florid-faced woman, with big, wide, blue eyes, who recognized Freda and came waddling toward her.

"Well, well, Freda," she began, putting down her basket. "I don't know when I've seen *you*. I always *like* to see you. It always makes me think of poor Jennie. Poor Jennie always liked you, poor child! Even when she could hardly sit up she'd always talk about you. Poor Jennie! She always sat next to you

in school, didn't she? She liked you because you said she was so pretty; and she *was* a pretty child, too. Just think of her and you sitting there together. Ain't it strange how as it's always the beautiful are taken?"

Freeing herself as soon as possible from the garrulous mother of the departed Jennie, Freda began to market in earnest. A wagon-load of meat attracted her attention first. When the farmer had finished with a group of customers, she pointed to some choice-looking mutton.

"How much is the lamb?" she enquired.

"Gawd knows 'tis little enough," he replied in a rasping, sorrowful tone, while he made gestures of innocence. "Gawd knows I'm not tryin' to flace dacent people like yourself. Gawd bless ye. And when ye see the rubbitch as yon jackeen does be haulin' t' town"—he nodded towards his nearest opposition—"and see the rediculous price he does be afther askin' fer it, Gawd knows, woman, 'tis little enough that I shud ask ony twinty-foive cints."

"Still," objected Freda, "it seems a little high, doesn't it?"

"High!" he exclaimed. "Wirra, woman, ye misjidge me! Gawd knows ye'd pay nigh double the price at the butcher's shop. An' I'm afther thinkin' that it's dodderin' little that a pretty, young lady as yerself does be knowin' o' the price o' butcher's mate, so it is. Gawd bless ye!"

"Gawd know's that's done it," laughed Freda, placing her order. "I'd buy it now even if I didn't want it."

While the farmer was carefully weighing the meat,

Freda was surprised by the sudden appearance of Edward Courtney, walking through the crowd toward her.

"Girl," he said, in his deep voice, "how much more do you intend to buy?"

"Not much, 'Ted," she replied. "Why?"

"Nothing. I was waiting to spin you home and maybe play you a game of cribbage before lunch. Like it?"

"Um-hum," she nodded.

"But don't hurry," he said. "I'm idle to-day as usual, and totally at your service."

"Aren't you an obliging person! Do you want to take my basket?"

"Pardon, how stupid of me!"

Marketing eventually finished, although not nearly so well finished as might have been, they wound their circuitous way to Queen Street, and, depositing the basket in the back of Courtney's car, climbed quickly in and motored home.

Courtney had a way of making himself swiftly at home with people he wished to befriend. He carried Freda's purchases boldly into her house, through the dining room and into the kitchen, where Mrs. MacDowell was peeling potatoes.

"I rescued your daughter just as she was finishing," he announced. He was pressing her wet hand, obdurate to her excuses, and bowing as punctiliously as at a drawing-room reception. "I hope you're quite well, Mrs. MacDowell. Freda and I are going to have a game of cribbage before lunch."

On the verandah they arranged chairs by the small table and began playing.

"The old town does bear down pretty heavily, Freda—what?" he enquired as he dealt the cards. "The

mater is slipping down to New York and Philly for a short duty call, and I'm wondering what wild schemes I can perpetrate during her regretted absence. I had thought of a foursome up the river in the big boat tomorrow night, but unfortunately the skipper has been graciously granted a week's shore-leave. Damn! The mater takes this generous tack merely as a curb on my propensities."

"Hard luck, Edward."

"But mark my vow, Freda—some time before I'm eighty, I'm going to stage a buster aboard the gentle *Cinderella*. However, I've got the launch in shape and all I need now is a personnel for this proposed voyage. What say?"

"Ted, I simply couldn't go."

He smiled while his eyes wandered over her fingers.

"I don't notice either a diamond or a frat-pin," he replied, teasingly.

"No; but, nevertheless, Ted, I'm practically engaged."

"What, ho!" he exclaimed, in a low tone of surprise.

"Freda, girl, are you genuine?"

"I really mean it, Ted."

"Dear heavens!" he mused. "Incidentally, though, my congratulations! Is it a secret?"

"Yes, just at present."

"Then, I'll regard it so. But to think of the partner of my youthful adventures being no longer available. Well," he added in a voice unusually serious for him, "Somebody's lucky."

"Why! You know you don't care," she rejoined off-handedly.

Courtney's face was sufficiently mask-like to hide whatever feelings he experienced, and accustomed enough to all contingencies to smile with its usual ease.

"Tell me, then," he presently inquired, "aren't you going to come dancing with me any more?"

"Possibly."

"There's going to be a *bon* affair at the Country Club in the shape of an informal free-for-all for clubbers and guests. It's on Wednesday. You'd better come."

"Well, Ted," she sighed, after a moment's hesitation, "I'm on. What time?"

"Expect me at nine—and thanks awfully."

The cribbage game was soon finished and Courtney, with a final *bon mot*, was striding towards his car, while Freda in an idle mood was thinking that, for all his shallow opulence and apparent emptiness, he possessed a social grace that was admittedly worth while.

CHAPTER X.

THE RELIABLE MAN.

NEXT day, Freda was agreeably surprised to be called on the telephone, about ten in the morning.

"Are you going to church?" asked Mauney.

"No, are you?" she asked.

"I'm too fed up, Freda, to bother. It's going to be a warm day and I think we ought to get out in the country, up the river some place. I've got a lot to talk about."

They motored to Shadow Bay, a dozen miles west of Lockwood, and had dinner together at the Chalet, a summer place, which, owing to the auspicious weather, was still open.

"I'm beginning to understand Lockwood better," Mauney said, as they sat on a shaded cliff after dinner. "I don't remember ever having put in a more disagreeable week in my life."

"What's wrong?" she enquired, with no suggestion in her voice that her own past week had been the most unpleasant she could recall.

"Just everything," he said. "I'm foolish to mind it at all. But the staff of the collegiate are the hardest people to get acquainted with. They're all capable, unusually so, but terribly stand-offish."

"That, my dear boy, is the key-note of Lockwood,"

she interrupted. "They've just naturally acquired that manner."

"I don't doubt it," he nodded. "But I wish they'd get over it. They seem to think I'm a high-brow, or something just as bad. Inadvertently I heard a couple of the men discussing my book, knocking it to beat the deuce."

"And do you actually care, Mauney Bard?" she asked in a surprised tone.

"Yes, I do," he replied. "I've always been damnably lonesome for pals, for good fellows, who, like Max Lee, could see the motive behind the act. Freda, you know the motive behind my book. You know it was merely a wish of mine to warm up the subject of history a little bit. Well, these chaps agreed that it was mere nonsense."

"That," sneered Freda, "was mere jealousy. They haven't tried to write a book. If they had they'd be more lenient. But really," she added, looking Mauney seriously in the eye, "I think you must be tired, for I never saw you so down in the mouth, before."

She wanted to pillow his head in her lap, and tell him that his book was the best one ever written. She longed to comfort him and change his loneliness. There were great allowances, after all, which she would gladly make for him. She knew all about his life now. She knew *him*, too—just how stimulating a little praise was to him, just how diffident he was about himself, and how hard it was for anyone to reach his real open self. As she sat there beside him and watched his strong, splendid profile, while he gazed at the river, she knew that she could never pity him. He was too big and strong. To-day was but a passing mood in his strong

life. Rather than comfort him she would prefer to cast her inmost self upon his support and be comforted. But he was too immovable either to come to her or to receive her.

"I've got a bone to pick, Mauney," she said.

"All right. What is it?" he asked pleasantly.

"Can't you imagine?"

"Possibly, but I'd prefer that you present the bone."

"Why didn't you call me up all week?"

"My easiest excuse would be that I did not think you cared."

"But," she answered, "as we happen to be sensible people of the twentieth century, and as you *know* I cared, tell me your real reason."

"Would work be a decent excuse?" he laughed.

"With anyone else but you, Mauney, it would do fine. But you must remember that I've only got three more weeks, perhaps, to stay in Lockwood."

"But three weeks is a long time, too, Freda," he said, seriously. "Just think how terribly much can happen in three weeks."

"I suppose you're thinking of history, are you?" she asked in a delicate tone of mockery.

"No, Freda," he replied, quickly. "I'm thinking of you. I'm thinking of you all the time, all this week. Please do me the honor to believe me."

"Sorry," she said, dropping her hand suddenly on his.

Her week of impatience quickly melted from her thoughts, and in the silence, as they sat so close together, she could have wept. Why had she used that little, mocking tone? If he could realize how she felt he would take her hand in his and not leave it just where

she had dropped it. But there he sat looking away toward the river, so very self-contained.

"And I was going to tell you," he said presently, "about the young people I'm teaching. I like them all right and I think they have unusual ability. But they have no enthusiasm, except a very few of them. I decided that I'd like to start a seminary for one of the classes where we could get right down to business and have open discussions. Don't you think that's a good idea?"

"Yes, Mauney, splendid," she replied, lifting her hat carefully from her head, and tossing it on the grass. "Why don't you do it?"

"Just one reason. Dover, when I put it up to him, didn't think it could be done. I talked it over with him in his office, Friday night. He's a good fellow and capable and has got a line on Lockwood that I wish you'd heard. He impressed on me that his words were confidential, but I'm going to tell you. He approved of the round-table idea immediately, but said it had once been tried out, and failed. They had to be held after regular classes, you see, and a lot of the wealthy people objected to their children being kept in. They sent doctor's certificates and raised the devil. Of course, once robbed of its spontaneity, the seminaries proved a failure."

"Enthusiasm," said Freda, "is one word that dear old Lockwood will never learn. They hate enthusiasm."

"You should have seen Dover," laughed Mauney. "When he grows warm under the collar he always gets on those two feet of his and hikes all over the room, like a madman looking for a hole by which to escape from his cell."

"He was just the same when I went," she nodded.

"I had touched a tender spot when I mentioned seminaries," Mauney continued. "It got him off on a general criticism of Lockwood. After he had paced the floor for a moment or two he stopped and said in his slow, nasal, sarcastic way: 'Mr. Bard, I've lived here for twenty-five years. That's exactly a quarter of a century, and I'm going to tell you that it's been exactly a quarter of a century too long. I don't know what's wrong with Lockwood, because I've been much too busy to try to find out.'"

"That sounds just like him!" laughed Freda.

"But, there's something wrong, I can assure you. A teacher who teaches in this town, is just a paid servant of the community. He has no social status, whatever. His wife has none either. His planetary orbit reaches as far as school at nine in the morning, and as far as bed at nine in the evening. If he tries to do more than he's paid for he becomes unpopular. They want uniformity, here in Lockwood and, by George, they're going to get it. That's why seminaries won't work, Mister Bard.'"

"Oh, well," Freda said, "you mustn't be discouraged, boy."

Mauney shook his head slowly while the muscles of his jaw hardened. "I'm far from being discouraged," he said quietly. "I've started in on this work, and I'm going to stay with it."

There, in that simple statement of his, Freda felt that his whole reliable character showed itself. Born of parents who had dug their living out of the ground, Mauney would persist in whatever task he undertook—obdurate, stubborn, steadfast and gloriously reliable.

They had supper at the Chalet and then returned to their nook under the trees. Freda had, by this time, attuned herself to the quiet and dispirited mood which seemed to possess Mauney. It would pass, she felt, but it was lasting unusually long.

"I couldn't come to see you this week," he said awkwardly. "I got a letter from the nurse at Rockland, and Max is dying."

"Dying!" she exclaimed.

He nodded his head slowly several times. That was all the explanation he could give for his conduct during the past week, and it had taken him all day to give it. They drove home in the twilight and later, on the verandah at MacDowell's, as he was bidding her good-night, the illumination of a red moon shining through a hot, smoky, sky showed him her face. Never would he forget the quietness of that moment, disturbed only by the wind in the pines, as he looked down upon her features, and suffered to clasp the vision in his arms. But he did not.

And when he had gone, Freda, unable to understand his restraint, suffered, too. Idealization was a bogey cast out of heaven years ago. She coveted actuality and the simple, sweet rewards of affection, and, in a pang of loneliness, she wished that Mauney was less immovable and self-contained and reliable.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MUSIC OF SILENCE AND OF DRUM.

THERE was a depth in Freda's nature which she was sure no one would ever discover. A delicate fear occasionally separated her from people for an hour of tranquil meditation, in which she reached back through time and down through obstructions to regain touch with it herself. Sometimes she would paddle slowly along the shore near her home, or, beaching the canoe on the meagre shelf by the cliff's feet, sit in passive enjoyment of the simple natural objects about her. She never took a book on these solitary excursions, because of a characteristic impulse toward actuality. The flat, round stones and pebbles, rendered smooth by years of the river's polishing, may have been very uninteresting and inanimate things, indeed, but she loved the amazing variation in their color, all dim, composite shades of purples, greens and nameless greys. There was a silence, not encroached upon by the monotonous murmur of the persistent shore waters, and a solitude unaffected by distant freighters moving slowly in the midstream. She would stretch supinely to gaze at the nervous phantoms of reflected light that pendulated upon the cavernous, stratified face of the cliffs, or to watch a fisher-bird perched attentively on a bare, protruding root, far up at the grassy edge above.

Her ears, attuned to disregard the soft sounds that formed about her an atmospheric velvet, began at length to hear that wondrous roaring silence that ever widened and thrilled with the very mystery of all mysteries. And she knew, but could never have explained, what else she found then. It was strength and rare forgetfulness of self, and belief in a vast Something that could never henceforth be doubted.

This, however, constituted for Freda merely that ultimate spiritual experience, painfully unapproachable by friends, which it is the strange lot of all mortals to know less or more. Men and women cling to it, hunger for it, recover it or lose it, but for ever treasure it. The gratifications of a hundred vaunted pursuits dissipate into shadow-play before it. And yet it is what? So elusive, so stupendous, so readily forgotten. The trammelling events of a world constantly with us, march upon us, swoop us into their caravanserie, and we are no longer the living strength of that incomparable hour. We are but the dutiful perpetuators of age-old customs and follies.

Back to life, as it was, and with an impetuous relish, went Freda, on the night of the dance.

It was no disloyalty to Mauney. Her nature surged energetically on both sides of the line of average experience. If there were moments of spiritual joy, there were also moments of blinder joy, when music inspired the sinews and the blood warmed. Life was so large that it could not remember from hour to hour its past occupations. Eyes that loved soft, verdant light at the river's edge, must love, too, the carnival display of garish crimsons and yellows; ears that had listened into the silence heard now the barbaric tune of drum and

trumpet with enhanced sensation. This gaiety was not disloyalty to Mauney. It was merely life—her life—that craved the thrills. She thought, as she pirouetted with Courtney, that the delectable exercise was indeed a necessary training. It made her love Mauney more. Taught by its care-free spirit, she would be better able to cheer that dependable man, who lived a life curbed constantly to the line of average emotions. With a fresher attraction she would decoy him from the inevitable, but wearing, sombreness of his lonely existence.

And then, too, as she half-meditated, the while her feet were gliding in accurate rhythm with her partner, Mauney could not really blame her. He had stubbornly withheld the final declarations and demands that would have made her his fiancée. And he had left her alone for a whole week. Reason, noble reason he had, no doubt. But she would value love that broke past all reasons; and now, if he learned that she had gone dancing with Courtney, the discovery might rouse him, by jealousy or caution, to that pitch of emotion where she longed to behold him. And, if he disapproved, he had only to discipline, to satisfy her.

Many of Lockwood's elite thought that Freda and Courtney made a striking pair, and said so. He was well known to have many attractions, some of them popular, some not. As a matrimonial prize he had been variously encouraged by several ambitious mothers; then given up, but never scorned. He enjoyed that kind of popularity which is inspired by wealth and ease, enhanced by a pleasant enough personality, but which is restrained by an envious bitterness seldom expressed. The wealthy are aware of such bitterness, but have learned to disregard it.

As for Freda, she was now practically a visitor in Lockwood society. A few years before she had been a beautiful and popular debutante, with an influential father. She was now a university woman, and her people, though not so influential as before, were still definitely well considered. To-night she was merely an admittedly beautiful and acceptable young lady. Society was not keenly interested in her.

"I think," said Mrs. Turnbull to Mrs. Squires, as they watched the dancing from the verandah, "that Miss MacDowell looks so graceful with Ted."

"He knows a good dancer," replied Mrs. Squires with a supercilious expression. "But you know, of course, that his mother, who is in New York, would scarcely approve if she were here."

"Why not?" enquired Mrs. Turnbull, with the seriousness due to a most important issue.

"No reason, except that the MacDowell's are scarcely—ah—what they were once, you know. And besides, I presume that Ted is expected to aim higher."

"Is he serious about Freda MacDowell?" Mrs. Turnbull asked in surprise.

"He was once, my dear, and Mrs. Courtney is known to have cut Freda rather cruelly on several occasions."

Freda, had she heard such remarks, would have been quite indifferent. The dance was the thing. It was the glory of movement and sound and color that charmed her. Courtney was but a means to an end—an impersonal partner who lived up to the character with his customary gentility. But Courtney was not quite impregnable. The intoxication of Freda's proximity had been making inroads on his polite reserve, and gradually

culminated in a little outburst as they stood alone on a deserted part of the verandah during a number.

"Girl, I love you!" he whispered passionately and tried to embrace her. But she pushed him back steadily.

"Ted, you do not," she replied angrily. "You just imagine it, and I don't like your arms on me, either! You may take me home, please!"

He bowed and went so directly for his car that Freda half forgave him. He told her on the way home that his only regret over the incident was her displeasure. He hoped that she might soon give him some slight reason to be less unhappy than he was just then. If she could not in any case entertain his serious bid for love, he would gladly content himself with the consolation of her friendship. Would she not, at least, forgive him for to-night?"

"I don't know, Ted," she replied, as he was about to leave her. "I didn't like it one little bit."

Nor did she.

In her room she engaged in an intense mood of self-despising, and anger and regret. Ah! She wanted Mauney's arms just then. Her sense of guilt melted into one of weakness and dependence. In his strong, clean arms she would be at last peaceful and safe. She ought not to have gone with Courtney. That was plain. But she had promised. Now she would confess to Mauney and accept his chastisement with delicious satisfaction.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ST. LAWRENCE HEARS A DIALOGUE.

THE next evening Mauney called at MacDowell's and had his first encounter with Freda's father. He found him comfortably seated with a newspaper on the verandah. As Mauney approached, MacDowell's sharp, black eye surveyed him over the corner of his journal. Then he removed his feet from the low wicker table.

"Good evening, sir," he said politely, rising and extending his hand. "Come right up. I ought to have met you before, Mr. Bard," he continued with a mischievous smile, "but better late than not at all. It's warm, isn't it? There's a chair. I don't know what's going to happen if it doesn't soon rain. We usually have a breath of air from the river here, but this last week, I've been sweltering."

"And what has surprised me, Mr. MacDowell," said Mauney, "is the general impression that Lockwood is such 'a cool, breezy, summer resort.'"

"So it is," Macdowell affirmed. "This is exceptional heat. You can go a long piece before you'll find a town whose situation, general lay-out, and climate can even compare with this wonderful little town."

"It's funny, though," rejoined Mauney, "how many knockers are to be found among its citizens. I've been

here only a couple of weeks, and I've noticed that the lower and middle classes—for I think the divisions are pretty distinct—are constantly fault-finding and grouching."

"No doubt, no doubt," MacDowell nodded, while his face reassumed the special enthusiastic expression which he always wore when praising his town. "Let them talk! But I'm going to tell you, Mr. Bard, that this town, out of the whole province, has, without exception, the most brilliant future before it. Some day you're going to see that river alive with commerce and our harbor crowded with freighters. The population is going to jump up, internal trade will flourish, the community will become permanently prosperous. And all this, once some big industry sees the advantage of locating here. It's no myth. It's bound to come."

Mauney liked the big man for his enthusiasm. He was inspired, as most people were who talked with MacDowell, by a new belief in Lockwood. After all, why should it not grow and prosper and become a city? There was the river, indeed; that great, potential artery of commerce, with its undeveloped water-power. And here was Lockwood, sure enough, strategically situated, and upon the very brink of an undeniably great future. Some personal magnetism of his host had conjured up the vision before him and taught him faith. He felt all at once a deep respect for the masterly man who, at this moment, although unnoticed, was smiling slyly at Mauney's serious face. MacDowell was at last clear to him: he was remaining in Lockwood because of his faith. He was tied to the old town by invisible bonds of strong affection and belief. Let them talk! Here was an heroic figure, a man of brave judgment and

great dreams. Mauney could not have been persuaded, just then, that his hero's dream was simply a lifelong adoration of Gloria Smith, and that his skilful role was but the disguise of a private loyalty. Later he would learn, perhaps, that MacDowell was, of all municipal students, the most confirmed pessimist, but that would never hinder him from liking the genial man and feeling that in some degree he redeemed Freda's home from hopeless frigidity.

At last Freda came out of the house, and seemed surprised to see Mauney. While they were talking her father interrupted good-naturedly.

"Look here, you folks, why don't you take out the canoe for a paddle along the shore?"

"You have a very fertile imagination, Dad," said Freda.

"Yes," he agreed dryly, "and a desperate determination not to be ousted from this verandah."

His suggestion was adopted, and together they crossed the rough tableland to the steps leading down to the boat-house, exchanging not a word as they went.

"I telephoned last night, Freda," Mauney said as he began to follow her down the steps.

"What time did you 'phone?" she asked, pausing as she reached the first landing.

"I think it was about nine, and your mother said you had gone to a dance."

Freda stood by the railing, looking away to the river as he reached the landing. She said nothing, but displeasure was written openly on her face. She had been looking forward to making her own confession of the gentle guilt. She had imagined herself saying: "I was a very wayward girl last night, Mauney," and him lis-

tening, thoroughly vexed. But he had spoiled that anticipation by knowing all about it.

"Well," she said, with a haughty elevation of her brows, "wasn't that all right?"

"Of course, it was all right, Freda," he replied. "But I had heard nothing about the dance, you see."

"Hadn't you *really*!" she exclaimed with more sarcasm than she felt.

"No," he replied quietly, but with a puzzled glance at her cheek which, though turned away, was suddenly very red. "I have no authority over what you do, Freda, and even if I had, I wouldn't use it."

"I don't suppose you would, Maaney. I suppose you'd *always* just let me do as I wanted to."

"You're quite right. But I was surprised last night, and a little bit hurt."

"Well, I knew you would be," she admitted, turning slightly towards him.

"And I just want to know," he continued, "if you're always going to do things that hurt."

"How do I know?" she retorted, facing him. "If you don't like things I do, why then, you've got to discipline me."

"Discipline you!" he exclaimed. "Why I hadn't even thought of disciplining you."

"Because," she interrupted without heeding his words, "I don't know what it is that sometimes plays the devil with me, and I've *got* to be disciplined. I've been like a boat without a rudder. My greatest need has been for some one to steer me."

"Tell me, Freda, who were you with at the dance?"

"Ted Courtney," she quickly answered.

His eyes opened wide, then grew thoughtful. "Do

you mean that he—that Courtney took you to the dance?"

"Yes."

He was silent a moment, studying the palm of his hand. "But I never dreamed that you even liked him," he said at length.

"I don't either, Mauney."

"I suppose," he said in a lower tone, as he leaned his hips against the railing and folded his arms on his breast, "I suppose it's really your business and not mine. Don't imagine that I'm trying to interfere in your affairs."

"Oh, goodness, no," she almost jeered. "I'm afraid there's not much danger of your ever interfering the least bit! Why, Mauney, I don't mind if you give me the very devil for going to that dance!"

"Only tell me. Why did you go with Courtney?" he asked with a deliberation that provoked her.

"There are just about forty-seven reasons," she stated with thin grace. "First, because I knew I shouldn't, second, because at the time he asked me I was furious with you for not calling me up for a whole week, third because I wanted to do something to relieve my fury."

"But, I told you," he interrupted in a quiet, polite tone, "I told you why I didn't call you up."

"You told me after I had promised to go to the dance."

"Yes, but you don't understand," he said, gently, taking off his straw hat and turning the rim slowly around between his hands. "It was not the dance. Can't you understand my feelings?"

"I understand them only too well." Her dark eyes were now burning almost savagely and her hands

tightly gripping the balustrade. She spoke in an unnaturally restrained tone. "It's Max Lee, of course, I've tried to feel sorry about him being ill. Perhaps I ought to be trying to comfort you. If so—too bad. I'm just being true to my feelings, that's all. You had to be so thoughtful of that man, didn't you, Mauney? Had to let him down so very, very easily. You couldn't let him die like a man, unhappy and miserable, but *like* a man you had to smooth out his path for him. Even if he did love me, which I doubt, he knew I didn't love him. What difference did he make anyway? Why allow your care for him to make you slight me? Even if Lee *is* dying," she concluded emphatically, "that's not half as dramatic as it looks. There are other people who are *living*—or trying to!"

"But he's been *my* pal, *my* friend, Freda," he answered very calmly, "and I'm afraid that you'd have to be a man to quite appreciate my feelings."

It was nothing apparently. Mauney seemed quite unperturbed. As Freda stood regarding his reposeful figure she wondered what she could possibly do to stir him up. Even rudeness to a dying man—for it was that—had not brought the storm she expected. Even scorn of his solicitude for a dying friend—for her words had been that, too—had failed to budge him an inch. And now he was there before her, leaning against the railing, reflectively flipping his finger at the lining of his hat, as if she had merely remarked upon the brilliance of the sinking sun, or the character of the weather.

"Why don't you curse me?" she asked presently. "I doubt if you have any feelings. Why don't you simply kill me for what I said?"

"In the first place," he smiled, "I don't think you quite meant it."

"Oh, but I did," she affirmed. "I really did."

"Come on," he said in a lighter tone, catching her hand and starting down the second flight of steps. "If I were to kill you, Freda MacDowell, it would be a tough little world for me to go on living in."

"Anyway," he added, drawing her gently along as she made to grasp the railing. "I certainly did use you rottenly last week. I can see now how you felt, and as for that dance and our friend, Courtney, well—I'm not going to be so miserably jealous any more."

The edge of Freda's knife-like mood was dulled a little by his words, and she followed him with a sense of defeat. It was becoming her ambition to see this big fellow angry. Why a woman should desire such a sight, and desire it like a fetish, is one of the obscure phenomena of feminine psychology. To say that anger reveals new qualities of the man is to give but a paltry explanation. During the little canoe journey along under the eastern shore of Lockwood, Freda kept thinking of Gertrude Manton's apothegm: "We don't know why our love makes us hurt them. They are only men, but we are women." But had Gertrude really managed to hurt them? That was the question. If so, unbounded praise! As for herself, Freda was ignobly defeated. The man at whose sure stroke her canoe glided so sleekly under the shadowy cliffs was surely incapable of anger.

CHAPTER XIII.

DISTRESS.

IT would always require a longer time for Mauney to become roused than for most people, in any vital matter. He would be sure to react very slowly to the irritating stimuli. He would gain cognizance of issues very tardily, and keep on half-doubting things that he hated to believe.

Friday, at noon, he crossed Church Street, from the collegiate to his boarding house, conscious of only one thing, that the morning's work had been utterly unsatisfactory. Just why his discipline over his classes had weakened he was not ready even now to enquire. The faces of half a hundred students can be very unfriendly at times. They can act as a unified mirror to throw back at a teacher the gloom, the uncertainty, the desperate undercurrent of his own mood. There had been slight lapses of memory when those inquisitive faces had roused him to complete the phrases almost escaped. No doubt he had appeared to them stupidly absent-minded. In the principal's office there had been a queer conversation, too. Dover had only been explaining some detail of routine, but he had worn an expression of impatient emphasis, as though he were trying to impress an idiot. That, too, had been due, no doubt, to Mauney's own preoccupation.

Noon recess on this Friday marked the end of the week's work. A half-holiday had been granted for some reason or other—preparation for field-day, now that he thought of it. He entered his room with a grateful sense of finding at last shelter and opportunity to think.

He knew that these bright days, with streets flooded by dry, hard sunlight were important and sombre days. Other people seemed to be free of care. Field sports and picnics up the river, and long, refreshing drives along the river road—these enjoyments were not, and could not be, for him. Nor was this September so much different from all his past autumns. Each fall had found him enmeshed in difficulties. He was beginning to perceive that his life lay just outside the border of the sunlight. And that, unprofitable though all his problems might be, they were, nevertheless, undeniably with him. He could not shirk them. Perhaps some strength might be gained in the effort to solve them. At any rate he realized quite clearly, as he removed his coat and tossed it on the bed, that the problem to-day was Freda MacDowell.

First of all he would shave. He had no sooner poured a little water into the basin on the washstand than the landlady knocked on his door.

"Come in, Mrs. Hudson," he said wearily.

As she entered, clothed as usual in her plain, print gown, his eyes focused on a yellow envelope in her hand.

"It's a telegraph," she announced officiously, but without proffering it. "And it's afther coming while ye were at the schule, Mister Bard. Poor mon! I due hope as it is nothin' alarming. It's the sight of a tele-

graph that I due dhread, Mister Bard. For wanse, several years ago, I did receive wan meself."

"But it may be nothing," said Mauney cheerfully, as he reached for it.

"Ah, but it's a telegraph, mind!" she insisted, while her eyes keenly studied her boarder's face as he tore it open and began reading. She preserved silence until he had finished, but her curiosity kept her standing, huge and peering, by the open door. She noticed his blue eyes scan the message hurriedly, then again several times more slowly. Finally he looked up over the edge of the paper with wide, blank eyes. He was conscious of her enormous body beside him and was irked by it.

"It's nothing much, after all, Mrs. Hudson," he said in a low tone, starting once more to read it.

"Imogine, now!" she replied, "Indade, but sure, I t'ought it would be afther bein' a—"

Mauney, ignoring her presence, went to the window and stood looking out on the street. Mrs. Hudson, after a final assertion that "a telegraph" was never a very welcome kind of missive, left and closed the door angrily.

"Patient failed to regain consciousness; died quietly six this morning." That, with the nurse's signature, was the whole message. Mauney stood pensively by the window wondering why he received the news so apathetically. It was unreal. It was unquestionably true. But the external objects of this bright, Friday noon wore a casual appearance that denied the occurrence of death. Church Street was just the same innocent, familiar thoroughfare. There were the groups of collegiate students hurrying along with books in their arms, laughing and talking. There was the doubled

old man, white-bearded and feeble, plodding down the walk, rapping the cement sharply with his metal-headed stick, and nearby, in the shade of a maple, lay the neighbor's familiar Airedale, mouth open and tongue protruding, as he panted in the heat.

Turning back into the room he slowly walked to his trunk and opened it. Then he folded the telegram quickly and put it in one of the compartments of the tray. As he closed the lid slowly he cleared his throat, and then set to work shaving. He tried, as faithfully as possible, to take an interest in his personal toilet, but found it quite a boring procedure. There was a new grey suit, hanging on the back of the door, to be worn for the first time to-day, and although it was very becoming, he took no pleasure in it. He was going down to the MacDowell's this afternoon to hear some expert piano music. Freda had telephoned him before school that Betty Doran, home from New York, was going to give a private recital to a few friends. Just who Betty Doran was he neither knew nor cared. What she was going to play he had not heard, nor was he in the least curious.

In fact, only one thing mattered—to-day, to-morrow or at any time—that he could conceive. That particular, important thing was a long talk with Freda, a talk which would have consequences. It would definitely end all misunderstandings, and rob her, once and for all, of any doubt about his love.

When he arrived at the MacDowell's he found himself a neglected member of a gathering of thirty. Betty Doran, a spoiled young person of eighteen with Dutch-cut hair, sat at the piano rendering Chopin brilliantly and smiling affectedly at the frequent applause of the

audience who filled the drawing-room. There was cake and coffee to be served afterwards, but Freda, who had taken a vow never to assist her mother with afternoon refreshments, stubbornly refused now, much to the remarked surprise of guests who saw her talking quietly with Mauney just outside in the hallway.

"This is about the last place I should have wished to come to-day," he was saying to her in a low tone. "Get me out of it, Freda. And, if you can get away this evening, I'm crazy to take you for a long drive out in the country. Are you free?"

She gladly agreed.

After the recital was finished and the last loquacious woman had finally bade the hostess good-bye, she turned quickly from the door and sought her daughter.

"It's simply terrible," she said with evident feeling, "that this Bard person should have been asked to our home to-day, and I must and do insist that in future, if you are so foolish as to see him at all—"

"Now, Mother," said Freda with some curiosity, "what on earth have the dear ladies been telling you?"

"Everybody knows it!" exclaimed Mrs. MacDowell. "He has been seen on the street with Mrs. Poynton and was also noticed coming out of her house."

"Well, anything else?" Freda coolly enquired.

"I think that's almost enough," smiled her mother. "No one is laboring under any delusions about Mrs. Poynton, surely."

"Perhaps not, Mother," Freda almost hissed, as, blushing red, she drew quickly back with hatred in her eyes. "Perhaps Mrs. Poynton was guilty of a sin you and Mrs. Beecher will not forgive her for. Perhaps it was a sin her husband will not forgive. I know noth-

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ing about her. I want to know nothing. But of one thing I am absolutely certain!"

"And of what, my girl, are you so certain?" asked her mother.

"That if Mauney Bard called at her home he did it in innocence," replied Freda, defiantly.

"Ha," gently laughed the proud scion of Family-Compact glory, "Your credulity is quite amazing. If you care to believe what you say, you are, of course, at liberty to do so. You have always been full of strange and reckless impulses."

"I believe in him so much," said Freda, with emphasis that caused her voice to break, "that I'd stake everything—yes, my life, on him. And you, Mother, without even inquiring into it, are ready, just like the rest of these fools, to throw your harpoon into an innocent man."

"All I say," replied her mother, haughtily, and with an aggravating smile, "is that this home—my home—is now closed to your glorious hero. I trust that is quite plain?"

Freda could not speak. Her face suddenly grew white as she stood in the middle of the dining-room floor fastening vengeful eyes upon her mother.

"It was even reported," continued Mrs. MacDowell, turning to arrange some flowers in a vase on the buffet, "that Mr. Bard spent the night at Mrs. Poynton's."

"It's a lie—a damned lie!" burst forth Freda. "Oh, tell me who said that!"

"No, I shall do nothing of the sort. Possibly you can imagine that it was told me in a kindly spirit."

"When—did they say he—did that?"

"Last week, of course," she replied. "When you were wondering what had become of him."

"Mother," Freda said more calmly, "Mauney will deny this for me. I know it's all a hopeless lie, one of the big, black lies that they love so much. You don't know him, Mother. You don't even want to know him. But let me tell you one thing, that you are as bad as the rest of them!"

"Indeed," smiled Mrs. MacDowell, turning from the vase of flowers.

"You are worse than a murderer," suddenly said Freda, while her face quivered with new rage.

Mrs. MacDowell's composure suffered a noticeable weakening. "My girl, I shall not tolerate such language!" she warned. "Be very careful."

"You are capable of a crime more dastardly than murder, because it requires no courage—"

"Enough!"

"No," fumed Freda. "It's not enough. You're going to hear it all for once. You have made me *hate* you."

Something of latent power in her daughter's manner put Mrs. MacDowell on guard.

"Why, Freda," she exclaimed. "What on earth. I only meant to—"

"It's what you've done that counts, Mother. I know he's innocent. My God, he must be innocent!"

Just a moment later George MacDowell came into the room and found Freda in a chair with her head clasped in her hands, weeping, and his wife standing, evidently distressed. He looked from one to the other regretfully. Sadness was in his black eyes as he looked accusingly at his wife.

"Gloria," he said. "I'm surprised. I've heard both

sides of this case. I couldn't miss it, by Gad. Look what you've done. You've broken her heart. Are you proud of your job? You women aren't sports, I tell you. Give her a fighting chance. Don't stand there gloating over it. This business of afternoon-tea scandals has gone too far."

"Why, George," she said nervously, "I only meant to warn her of—"

"But you've broken her up, completely. Now, look here," he said more seriously than she had ever heard him speak. "This is no small matter. Let's get a little British fair play into this business. Do you know what I'm going to do?"

He brought his fist sharply into his opened palm.

"I'm going to get Mauney Bard. If he's a man he'll stand his trial and either deny it or not." He started for the door, picking up his hat from a table nearby. Then before leaving he turned. "Ladies," he said. "I will request you both to wait my return."

"But, George," said Mrs. MacDowell, "I think such a thing is absurd."

"And I don't want it either," said Freda.

"Well, you're both a fine lot, by Gad," said MacDowell, impatiently tossing his hat to the table. "All right. But one thing I insist on, Gloria, and that is that you immediately govern your tongue. This is your house, but it is my home, and this is my daughter."

MacDowell sauntered slowly back to the library, while his wife somewhat informed as to new qualities in her married partner, departed quickly for the kitchen and began making unnecessary noise with the dishes. Freda proceeded to her room and was not seen again until eight in the evening, when she came down and passed through,

without speaking, on her way to the garage. They heard the rumble of the motor-car and both watched, from different vantage points, as it sped quickly between the pine trees on its way to Queen Street. During the evening, while MacDowell in the library, as Mayor of Lockwood, gave audience to some business men from Merlton, his wife sat playing solitaire on the southern verandah.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT YELLOW EYES SAW.

FREDA was so quiet as she and Mauney drove along the river road and so unusually unresponsive to his remarks, that he began to wonder if he had discovered her in another of her unpredictable moods. For some time he, too, was silent.

"Well, Freda," he said at length, with forced cheerfulness, "suppose we both loosen up for a change. That musicale was pretty nearly too much for me, and I suppose it affected you in the same way. These last two weeks have been about the least satisfactory passage in my life, so far, and if I were to give in to my feelings I would be a rare study in despondency."

"Lockwood blues!" said Freda, dismally, as she slowly stopped the car by the side of the road. "It's bound to get you. However, we've got to go on living, and I hear that you've been showing some attentions to a married woman."

"Indeed," laughed Mauney, good-naturedly, "and who is the favored lady?"

"This isn't such a laughing matter as it looks, Mauney," she replied with some severity. "My mother's wild about it."

"About what?"

For an instant she tugged at her gloves and removed them. "I wish," she said, "that I were feeling a little

happier than I am. I'll tell you what it's all about. You were said to have been seen on the street with Mrs. Poynton, and also leaving her house one evening."

"Well, that's true enough," admitted Mauney as he waited for her to continue.

"Then you *were* with her?" asked Freda quickly.

"Yes, why not?" he asked with a puzzled frown. "Isn't she all right?"

"God knows whether she's all right or not, but she's got a horrible reputation."

"Jean Byrne!" exclaimed Mauney, incredulously.

"Yes," she nodded impatiently. "Mrs. Poynton has been very injudicious. I have never really interested myself in the details and I hate saying such things about anyone, but I simply couldn't believe that you had associated yourself with her in any way. But now that you admit it I suppose I am obliged to tell you more. It's all over town that you stayed at her house all night."

Mauney's mouth opened to speak. Then his face suddenly grew pale and he gazed in silence past her head into the woods that rose at the side of the road.

"Well, aren't you going to deny it?" she asked in a tone of surprise.

"Surely I don't need to?" he said a little angrily. "Surely you don't believe them?"

"If I were eighteen I'd say no. But I'm twenty-six, unfortunately. And still more unfortunately, some things are true no matter how much we don't believe them. I think," she added precisely, "it's only a fair proposition that you should either deny it or make some intelligent explanation."

Mauney's face, as it lowered slightly towards his

breast, was that of a man for whom the light of the world had suddenly gone out.

"And I'm afraid," he said calmly, but with clear decision, "that I will never do either."

"But, don't you see," she asked with perceptible concern, "that I would not demand it, except that it has been put up to me strongly?"

"I can see nothing," he replied slowly, "but an un-beautiful lack of faith."

Freda had turned her head away, so that Mauney did not see the dawning light of wide-eyed fear, nor the quiver of infinite regret.

For a moment she remained thus, and when roused by the shuffling of his feet she turned again, he was stepping from the car.

"I know you will pardon me," he said. "But under the circumstances, and with this scandal over my head, I cannot allow you to be seen with me in public."

"Oh, don't!" She tried to speak, but further words would not come. She saw him lift his hat and, turning away, walk slowly down the road. It had all happened so quickly that she could scarcely believe her eyes. What had she done?

For a moment she watched his retreating figure. Then, with decision to turn the car after him, she settled behind the wheel and adjusted the spark lever preparatory to starting the engine. But her hands, obeying some vague instinct, dropped to her lap. His leave-taking had been so final—and she was a woman! She turned again in the seat and watched him as he went. How could he leave her so abruptly. Surely the trouble between them had been entirely upon the surface. Surely he misunderstood her. This superficial mood of hers,

that demanded explanations, was but a vexatious billow. Underneath lay the sea of her love. She did not believe a word of the wretched scandal. Neither now, nor before. He was innocent, of course. What had she done?

A car was approaching and Freda automatically started her engine and turned her motor to the road. Slowly she moved along the smooth tarvia surface, crawling like a guilty thing farther away from Lockwood. She wanted to turn about, drive quickly back, and, drawing up beside him, make amends. But her car seemed to be possessed of a will of its own. It kept straight on into the country, while Freda put forth a futile effort to wring decision from the jumbled thoughts in her mind. Above all considerations, a new fear was possessing her.

"I know; I know it," something said within her. He had turned away from her with an air of finality—that man who was so hard to move. During the past week he had stubbornly resisted her whimsical tantalizations. Facing her conscious weapons of provocation, he had remained self-contained. But to-night, almost without knowing it, she had moved him, indeed. And Mauney, with his great inertia, once moved, would maintain an irrevocable motion. It was thus, she felt.

Her knowledge of his personal difficulties had taught her a glorious admiration that now changed to a quite tender pity; and the thought of having added to them brought up self-hate that tortured her almost intolerably.

Yet, although it would be seemingly simple enough now to double back on her course and assure him of her trust, she realized how strangely paralyzed her will power had become. One emotion will lead to definite

action. But she was now possessed of a dozen sharp emotions that baffled her and rendered her uniquely powerless to act. As she drove on very slowly, unconscious of time, there occurred a gradual balancing and checking off of these various feelings, until, at length, she knew only that, by her own words and attitude, she had killed love in the man she revered, and that he was now suffering. Finally, when she turned about and drove homeward, her mind had clarified her feelings until nothing remained but a wild regret. Half stupified she entered her father's gateway and ran the car into the garage.

When she walked into the house, she found her father sitting in the library, reading.

"Where's Mother?" she asked.

"She's over at Beecher's," he replied. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing."

She stood in the library door, stupidly looking at him huddled behind his newspaper. The house was very quiet. He was engrossed with the journal. She heard the ticking of a clock in a bedroom upstairs. Her father sat with one foot crossed over the other in such a way that his trouser leg was pulled to reveal his grey sock. She noticed that the design on the sock, woven there with black thread, was broken and that some of the threads were standing at loose ends.

Suddenly the rattle of the newspaper startled her. "What's wrong?" he asked, glancing up.

"Nothing, Dad," she said, turning towards the hallway.

"Did you want your mother?"

"No."

She walked quickly to the telephone, raised her hand

to take down the receiver, then hesitated. She knew that it would be a simple matter to telephone to Maaney. It was only ten o'clock. And so much depended, it seemed, on her telephoning to him just now. Dropping upon the telephone stool she placed her hand again on the receiver and kept it there. She was quite unconscious of her father's presence nearby. The only thought in her mind was that Maaney was suffering. It would be so easy to say: "Please come down; I want to see you." But her hand slowly relaxed and fell into her lap. Her will power had strangely left her.

"I'm going to bed," announced her father, coming out into the hallway, yawning. As he reached the foot of the staircase he paused. "By the way," he said. "There were a couple of important people down from Merlton this evening, Freda!"

"Anything promising?" she asked vacantly.

"Nothing to the public, mind!" he smiled, raising his hand in a gesture of caution. "But, between friends, I'll drop a word of cheer. These gentlemen are looking for a site for a really big concern. They've got a factory in their minds that covers ten acres and I let 'em know that Lockwood had that much ground for them, too. Aren't you tickled?"

"Oh, yes," nodded Freda automatically, although she did not know what he had said. When he had gone to his bedroom, she rose from the stool knowing that she was quite incapable of telephoning to Maaney.

The house seemed quieter than it had ever been before. Removing her sweater-coat, she literally pitched it into a corner and went out on the verandah. Careless of all but the wild regret that was torturing her she dropped into a hammock and clasped her head

with her hands. Whenever she glanced between her fingers she saw the lawn with its dismal pines and a faint mist that curled up over the edge of the cliff nearby. The lights of the United States shore, usually so bright, were shut out by a fog.

Presently, from the gateway next the street, two pencils of brilliant light quivered against the pine trunks, and, slowly swerving, illuminated the house, as a motor car softly approached. The man who drove it saw the verandah clearly and the form of a woman reclining in the hammock. She had evidently thrown herself down very carelessly, for her black stocking stood out in bold contrasts with the yellow hammock. Edward Courtney followed down the graceful lines to her ankle and to the neat patent-leather Oxford, whose tip barely rested on the floor. Having finished his admiring inspection he sounded his horn blatantly and touched into silence the soft purr of the motor as he drew near and stopped.

Freda sat quickly up.

"Want a spin?" he asked, turning toward her over the side of the car.

"No, Ted," she replied, "I don't feel like it, thanks."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

Courtney got out and came up on the verandah.

"I suppose," he remarked, helping himself to a chair, "a person has to speak ahead these days, eh?"

"Oh, I'm not in such demand as all that, Ted," she replied. "But I'm blue to-night."

"Blue! Good Lord, girl, that's tough. You need cheering. And I'm an awfully good cheerer, too."

As he spoke he leaned back in his chair so that the light from the dining-room window struck fair upon

his long, pleasant face. Freda, whose first wish had been that Courtney might just now find himself in hell or any other place, but her verandah, suddenly felt that, even in her present mood, human company was a relief.

"Ted," she said. "I wonder if you ever have a serious thought in that head of yours."

"Very seldom, Freda. This head has never ached with an idea. Why should it? I'd rather have it ache with sloe gin or curaoa. An idea is so liable to turn out to be weak-kneed, or revolutionary, or expensive, and sloe gin is so simple and reliable."

"I believe you've had some to-night," she remarked dryly. "Something has made you unusually bright."

"I've had a thimbleful, I confess."

"And you have the nerve to come over here to a perfectly dry house without bringing some with you!"

"How stupid of me," he smiled, slyly. "I thought drinking was one of your pet aversions—"

"So it is; but I—"

"I almost hesitated to come on that account," he interrupted. "Bill Squires told me I was 'canned,' and Betty Doran told me I was disqualified for polite society. They're over home, there, now, discussing the New York theatre season with the mater. She landed in to-day with a raft of new jazz stuff and a confounded jumping-jack that won't jump. Some beggar on Bryant Square stuck her a quarter for it. Did I understand you to say, Freda, that you would like a drink?"

Courtney produced a bottle from his coat pocket and set it on the table near him.

"I didn't bring any glasses," he ventured.

"Never mind," she said, rising. "That part is easy.

I think a drink will do me good this evening. I've been half sick all day."

The comfort that Freda derived from both Courtney and the spirits was very meagre. He rambled on lightly for a time, glass in hand, explaining how bored he had become with Lockwood, and what a necessity existed for some excitement or other.

Freda found that his essential vapidness was no solace, but an irritant, and that her few draughts of sloe gin, so far from wooing her away from the present woe, seemed to clarify and emphasize it. While he talked, she constantly reviewed her recent episode with Mauney, and the flush of her cheeks, so vivid in the glare of Courtney's matches, depended less on gin than on a growing mood of expostulation against the nature of things. He, of course, would have been incapable, even in his soberest moments, to divine or even recognize her spiritual state, and could, therefore, be excused, at present, for failing. When she began talking in a happier-sounding tone, he did not know that a veritable blaze of irresponsible temper had kindled. Thick of ear, he missed the irony of her voice. Thicker of brain, he took her words at their face value, unconscious of the tremendous discount that existed.

"You're a regular old dear, Ted," she said. "What would I ever do without you? You and your sloe gin! You and your nice cars, Ted, and your yachts. Aren't you a darling old thing!"

"Glad to get a little appreciation," he laughed. "Ever since the dance I've been waiting to see you." He paused a moment. "Have you forgiven me yet, girl?" he asked more seriously.

"You stupid boy! A woman always forgives a man

for falling in love with her. In fact," she added thoughtfully, "a woman will forgive anything in the world, but suppression."

"I couldn't suppress it, Freda!" he replied, leaning toward her and resting his hand on hers. "I *had* to tell you I loved you."

"Really, Ted!" she answered flippantly. "Please go on."

"But you're such a firebrand I never know how to take you," he confessed, "I never know what will please. If I don't warm up I think your eyes are despising me, and if I do you suddenly teach me my place. And then you tell me you're practically engaged. Ah, well!" he sighed, dropping his hand reluctantly to his side. "I'll try to be a platonic friend, though it's a damned hopeless business. What do you say to a moonlight trip among the islands?"

"There's no moon, Edward."

"But we have strong imaginations."

"Yes, too strong, I'm afraid. How would we go?"

"On the launch."

For an instant Freda sipped from her glass, reflectively.

"You probably think I'm afraid to take you up on that, Ted," she said very calmly. "But you're wrong. Go and get your launch and I'll be waiting for you on the steps of our boathouse."

Courtney smoked quietly a moment without speaking. As he rose, stretched himself, and walked toward his roadster, Freda sat watching him. Not until he had driven to the gate did she move a muscle. Then, with a short, spasmodic sigh, she rose from the hammock and entered the house. She had donned a sweater and

a coat and was just coming out again to the verandah, when her mother's step was heard crunching the pebble path.

"Where are you going?" she asked, as she came up.

"For a breeze up the river," Freda said, ill-temperedly.

"With whom?"

"Ted Courtney."

"Well, are you aware of the time?"

"No, not very much."

"And it's a dark, foggy night," continued Mrs. MacDowell, with a glance towards the river. "It's much too late to—"

"Why, Mother," laughed Freda, "it's *never* late. That's just a conventional idea. Maybe the fog will blow away in an hour or so, and the stars come out and even the moon, too, for all we know."

"But I don't want you to go, my girl," she continued, stepping nearer Freda, and peering critically into her face.

"I haven't worried much about your consent, Mother, during the past few years, have I?" she asked crisply. "Do you think I would begin to do so now—to-night?"

There was almost studied scorn in Freda's carriage as she stepped widely past her mother and left the verandah, while Mrs. MacDowell stood watching her disappear in the direction of the river.

Down at the boathouse, under the high cliff, she presently awaited Ted's coming. There were sights and sounds here to beguile her impetuous thoughts. The night was warm and her prophecy of moonlight came true. From above the opposite shore the great, yellow orb lifted with delicate tremblings, as if its sphere were made of elastic substance. Its golden light caressed

the whimsical clouds of mist that scurried like steam above the dull, green water. The waves lifted and fell, but never broke, as if, on such a night, they were anxious to be so gentle.

She sat perfectly still, knowing it was all madness, but as determined as she ever had been about anything. Then she turned her head thinking she heard the sound of his launch. But she had not heard it. It came with silent engines, like a sleek, white ghost, long and graceful, emerging from the fog and slowing down as it bent its course to sidle noiselessly closer and closer. She stood up, shrinking back, half afraid, as if this trim craft were not guided by human hands, but was approaching like an event, exquisite, but inevitable. She sprang then to the landing to clasp his hands as he drew her aboard. "Freda, you're wonderful," she heard him say, as the boathouse grew smaller, and the nose of the launch bore out into the broad, grey, depths of river and moon and mist.

No one knows how beautiful Lockwood is until he sees it from a boat on a bright night. There are broad, grey buildings whose massive stone faces shine like frost. Lines of glimmering lamps stretch far along the level thoroughfares and mark the streets that climb steeply upward from the water. In the midst, clusters of generous trees, motionless and black, send up, somewhere from their indefinite mass, dark spires into the soft, grey sky, while a tall clock-tower gazes with its yellow eyes east and south and west. At midnight, town and river are silent, save for the mournful chime of the clock marking a new day. And one who hears the message from the river finds a wistful, unspeakable sadness in its tone.

The mists cleared to reveal a white craft floating aimlessly in mid-stream. The moon threw into bold sculpture a man and a woman who lounged in silence there. Both were as still as the becalmed night, their restlessness appeased as by a magic from the golden moon. There were no words. In the woman's heart there was no happiness. It had not been love. It had been wild regret and mad despair.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT WAS INEVITABLE.

BY the window of her room, opened to the river, Freda remained all the rest of the night. There was no soul near her. She watched the grey river until the moon sank, and until the sun rose slowly from behind the opposite shore. No one would ever understand it. It was not the kind of sorrow that could be confessed and forgotten. Something irrevocable had controlled her fate. Now, so long as the world stood, her heart would find no friend to learn its bitterness. Deep in its inscrutable recesses suffering would call to suffering and receive no answer. Alone, desperately alone, she must stumble bravely before the inevitable current that bears towards to-morrow.

But these night thoughts gradually surrendered their poignancy to the bald light of growing day.

In the middle of the forenoon Mauney came to the house.

She took him into the library, and pointed to a chair beside the large French window that let in a blinding shaft of sunshine.

"I hope I'll be pardoned," he said, "for coming down so early."

She made no reply, but watched him as he leaned forward to gaze at the sunlight on the rug.

"I still can't think that you were honest last night, Freda," he continued. "I can't think that you believe this confounded scandal."

"No, Mauney," she answered sadly. "I never believed it."

"I can understand how you felt," he admitted, "And I ought not to have been so precipitate. I ought to have denied it for you. I deny it now thoroughly and completely. Jean Byrne was an old school teacher of mine."

"Oh, Mauney, you don't need to explain. My faith in you never faltered a minute at any time. I was only afraid that I had hurt you."

"You did, too," he said, "But being hurt didn't alter the fact that I loved you, and that I love you right now more than any thing on earth."

He rose and walked to her chair.

"Freda," he said tenderly, "I can't go on living without you. You are necessary to me. Tell me that you care as little as I do about this scandal!"

"It's nothing—just nothing," she replied, rising and walking to the window.

He followed her, and as he saw her white gown rimmed with the strong sunshine, and her black hair caught in a fringe of golden light his heart bounded. Here before him was the living woman he loved. She was his treasure.

"I have waited long enough," he said, taking her hand. "I have been a fool long enough, Freda. Our love is deeper than such a petty misunderstanding."

"Yes," she said very softly, without turning from the window, "It is deeper."

With his hand on her shoulder he turned her face to

him, but as he was about to draw her close he noticed a sadness in her eyes that puzzled him.

"What's wrong?" he asked gently.

"Tell me what's right!" she replied, as she bit the tip of her handkerchief. "I'm sure I'll kill you when I confess—and yet, I must tell you, so you can know what I'm like."

"What do you mean?"

"Last night I promised to marry Ted Courtney."

Mauney stared incredulously.

"Courtney!" he stammered. "But—Freda—why?"

Her eyes, as they turned toward the window, were dry and possessed of a bitter calmness.

"I don't understand," Mauney said, and paused.

"You promised to marry Courtney. Do you mean that?"

"Yes—unfortunately."

"But surely—" he began. "You're not going to—to do it."

"Yes, Mauney," she said, "I'm going to be his wife. Will you let me explain?"

He stared at her mystified.

"Remember me for one virtue, will you?" she asked, as she turned to fondle his coat lapels.

"Remember that I never deceived you. How can I tell you? Last night," she continued in a lower tone, as her eyes shifted to the pine branches beyond the window, "I couldn't have been quite myself. I tried to fight against my feelings, but I was crazy with regret, and weak."

"But, Freda."

"Sometime," she interrupted. "You may be able to understand. I'm afraid you couldn't now."

"But think," he said. "You can break your promise. You *must*!" He drew her impetuously to him.

"Don't, please don't," she implored. "I can't let you."

His arms were trembling and on his face she read dismay. "But have you never loved me?" he demanded, "all these months?"

"I am an impatient person, Mauney," she replied, freeing herself from his arms. "With me love must be romance or nothing. I must be taken when the fire burns in my heart. I can't control it. All I know is that somehow you missed it. And now I cannot—come to you."

Mauney, plunging his hands into his pockets, wheeled suddenly towards the window and stood for a long moment in puzzled meditation.

"Do you love Courtney?" he asked suddenly, glancing towards her.

"That question," she replied, "seems somehow to be outside the rights of our present conversation."

Her face, which had been pale, flushed a little. "If you are going to demand too many explanations, then I'll ask you how it was possible for you to put Max Lee between us?"

"Why, Freda," he began.

"And don't you think," she interrupted, "that, if you are quite frank with yourself, you'll admit that you played with me a little longer than I could be expected to stand?"

He did not reply.

"Mauney," she said, seating herself with all appearance of complacency in a deep chair. "Let's not insist on rebelling against what is inevitable."

"But why should it be inevitable?" he asked. "I

think I am sufficiently intelligent to grasp any reasonable explanation."

He walked quickly towards her. "Look here," he said, folding his arms on his chest and fastening her gaze, "if you don't love Courtney, why the devil will you marry him?"

For a moment her dark eyes seemed to expand with her effort to capture a fit reply. Then she said, slowly and softly, as if, in any event, her realistic nature could find some solace in things as they are: "I am going to marry him because he loves me, and because I was weak enough to give myself to him."

CHAPTER XVI.

GYPSIES' FIRE.

LIKE a flash the situation dawned on Mauney. It dawned so flashingly that he tried to hide from it all afternoon. Her impetuous nature! His own tardiness and his own misinterpreted duty to Maxwell Lee. While he had maintained loyalty to Lee, this woman, this Freda, whose very likeness had been burned into his soul, had been slipping from his fingers. And now, torn between self-blame and an effort to excuse her most recent fault, he began to recognize just how ultimate and hopeless the whole matter was.

He met Mr. Fitch, of Lantern Marsh, on the street and accepted a ride to the farm with him. Perhaps he would never have thought of going home had Fitch not suggested it. There was nothing at Lantern Marsh to go for, either. But he craved solitude, and at least his old home would afford him that. The old swamp would somehow understand him, he felt. There would be a queer kind of sympathy in that old swamp.

When he reached home he found a visitor, one he had almost forgotten and one whom he was not overjoyed at meeting in his present chaotic mood. David McBratney had been in Merlton for eight years and was

only now, after so long an absence, refreshing his acquaintance with the people of his youth. It was fortunate, according to Dave, that Mauney had just happened in when he was there. But Mauney felt that the most unfortunate fact in the world was that he should have to converse politely with any one to-night. They were all just ready to sit down at the supper table—William with his shirt sleeves rolled up on his sunburned arms, Evelyn placing her two red-faced little boys on stools, and McBratney being shown a place beside Mauney on the opposite side. When they were seated, William, carving knife in one hand and a long, serving fork in the other, looked up lazily from the crisply-browned roast on the platter toward his wife and made an awkward, snuffling sound. Mrs. Bard caught the hint.

"Mr. McBratney," she announced, "will ask the blessing. Bow your heads, you kids!"

"Bless, O Lord, we beseech Thee, this food, forgive our sins, and guide us ever in the light of thy countenance. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

An amused smile flickered over William's face as he winked unnoticed to Evelyn, his wife. Then, plunging his fork into the juicy meat, he proceeded to slice it.

"Dave," he asked. "How's your appetite?"

"Pretty good, Bill," responded McBratney. "It's a long time since I had a meal off o' this old table, isn't it?"

Evelyn Bard, opposite her husband, was busy spreading butter on thick slices of bread for her boys. They

stared in silence at the visitor, interrupting their occupation only long enough to accept the buttered bread and to begin chewing it.

McBratney had lost nothing of his swarthy complexion. His dark eyes were just as sharp, but more serious, than formerly. He wore a threadbare, yet neat, grey suit and a plain, blue four-in-hand necktie. Broad of shoulder, he lounged against the edge of the table, gazing half-meditatively at the children.

"Well, Dave," remarked William, as they all fell to eating, "you hain't never been back since you went away have you?"

"This is the first time, Bill. I got kind of lonesome to see the old folks; so I thought I'd come down for a few days. My mother tells me that dad has never been satisfied since he sold the farm. She says he drives down here about once a week, just to see how things are going."

"Yep," nodded William, "at *least* once a week, don't he, Evelyn?"

She nodded. "The poor old chap can't stay away," she explained. "He never should have sold out, I always think. When a man gets attached to a place it's foolish to leave, at his age, anyway."

William was chewing his food thoughtfully, with an expression of narrow-eyed meditation.

"Dave," he ventured, at length. "I always thought your old man never forgave you for leavin' home. Course, I never said a word to him, understand. It takes all kinds of people to make up the world, and I'm not sayin' you didn't do the right thing, neither. Maybe some people might say you was wrong, but I got enough

to do without tendin' to other people's business." William's eye quickly took in McBratney's business suit, while a look of curiosity came over his face. "Of course," he said, in a tone that challenged explanation, "I always had an idea as you had gone into preachin'."

"I studied at it awhile," McBratney admitted, good-naturedly, "and then I suddenly quit it."

"What made you quit it, Dave?" persisted William. "Was it costin' too much?"

"No, it don't cost too much, but I couldn't see much head nor tail to it," confessed McBratney. "I went on with it till they started talking about the Trinity, and—"

"Trinity, eh, Dave?"

"Yes, and a lot of other theories that don't count. When they began splitting hairs about baptism and sacraments, I said to myself, 'This isn't pitching hay!'"

"That's a fact, too, Dave," nodded William, sagely.

"Twasn't what *I* was cut out for anyway," said McBratney. "I couldn't see how baptism nor sacraments, nor any such like, was going to save the world. I saw people every day in Merlton, who were so deep in sin that they were pretty near hopeless, and, although I don't know much, I reckoned that these fine points of doctrine were all twaddle."

"That's what I always thought, Dave. You didn't make no mistake there, I tell yuh."

"No, Bill," he replied. "All I knew was that something big and strong had taken hold of me. I knew that I had the love of God in my heart and that every ounce of muscle in my body was going to be used up helping some of these poor beggars on to their feet."

"That's right, Dave—that's the only religion there is,"

commented William. "You didn't make no mistake there."

"And so I just pitched those Hebrew books about as far as I could heave, and settled down into steady work at the settlement."

"Good for you, Dave. What kind of settlement do you mean?"

"A settlement, Bill, is a kind of organization supported by various people for reclaiming bums and no-goods," said McBratney. "We take in the riff-raff, without a word, give 'em clothes and grub, and get 'em work to do. We start them off in life again and give them a second chance to go straight. Our idea is to reclaim damaged goods, Bill, we try to—"

"Um-hum!" interjected William, "I can see the sense in that, Dave. What's your work?"

"I'm on the employment department. I keep a list of jobs, and fit these bums into them. After they get started I go around and see how they're doing. If they're falling down on the job I brace them up a little or change their job for them."

"Do you get much salary, Dave?"

"No. It isn't the money I'm after, Bill. What I like about it is the game. Some of these bums have to be handled pretty carefully, and that's my work. I never *was* afraid of anybody, and I've got to meet the man yet that can handle me."

McBratney's eyes sparkled with keen pleasure, and he squared his shoulders unconsciously as he spoke. Fighting the worst in men was his occupation. It was an energetic business of consecrated brawn. It was muscular Christianity of the most earnest and pugnacious

type. Mauney felt that here beside him at the table sat a kind of modern crusader. One *had* to be good if McBratney was about, or otherwise be able to defeat him in a pugilistic contest.

For two or three hours Mauney found no alternative, but to sit and talk with him. At any other time the occupation would have been bearable or even pleasant, for he discovered many admirable, and almost lovable, qualities—if one could dare to feel so tenderly toward a modern Sir Galahad. But Mauney was too full of his own troubles to-night to be otherwise than indifferent to McBratney. His heart seemed to be breaking beneath these troubles. He wanted to leave his brother and the others, and walk alone by himself by that old swamp in front of the house. McBratney had changed, William and Evelyn had changed, he himself was changing in some indefinite way, while all the universe seemed in flux. What existed without change?

Some one came walking up the lane and opened the kitchen door. It was the Englishman who rented the old McBratney farm. His face was mildly excited.

“Did you see the fire?” he asked.

“Where, Joe?” asked William, uneasily.

He stepped back on the verandah and looked towards the road, and Mauney saw a dull, red reflection on his face. In a moment they were all walking toward the road. By some means a fire had started among the dried grasses of the swamp, and was spreading rapidly, with nervous little flashes of flame shooting up through heavy, grey clouds of smoke. There was no wind to fan the fire, but the light grass carried it swiftly along in a curve like an enlarging wave.

"It's going to get into them cedars, too," said William.

"Well, let 'em go," said McBratney. "The barn's safe as long as there's no wind. There's nothing you can do, anyway."

"I wonder how it got started?" queried William. "I seen some gypsies in that end o' the field over there last night. Maybe they left some live coals."

"That may be," admitted Joe, the Englishman. "But I've heard as how a bog like this here sometimes generates its own fire by spontaneous combustion, I have."

Their faces were all well lit up now by the reflection. Mauney glanced at the house. Its red bricks were illuminated by a ghastly, unnatural glow, while the window-panes began flashing spasmodically, one after the other, as if some one inside the house were going with a light from room to room. The fire ran swiftly toward the edge of the swamp, and the cedar boughs burst quickly into flame as if they were composed of explosive substance. Among a dozen trees the flame spread savagely until the appearance was that of huge, black torches, perched together to give a warning to the sky.

Held by the fascination which fire always possesses, they stood for two hours watching its ravages. From shore to shore the crimson, liquid wave crossed and rebounded until at last the cedars and hemlocks were all ablaze, forming a wide and brilliant fringe for a central, smoke-obscured space. It was not like the same place. It was not like the Lantern Marsh. Later, when the yellow flames had all gone out and the rising moon showed only the constant clouds of smudgy smoke ris-

ing and disappearing, Mauney sat alone on the front steps of the farmhouse, watching it with mute fascination. At last his marsh was completely defeated, ruined and blotted out. But a whimsical comfort possessed him. It was not defeated. Winter and then spring—and the unfailing reservoirs of the deep earth would pour water into the scorched basin again. Grass and trees would eventually grow up where now there was only ashes, to proclaim that life had gained the victory over death—that there was no death, but only life.

THE END.

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